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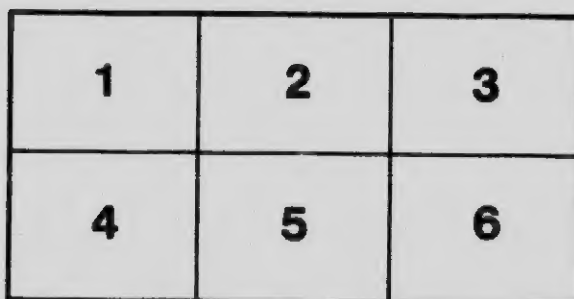
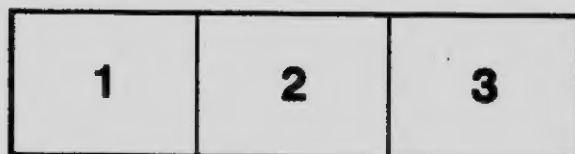
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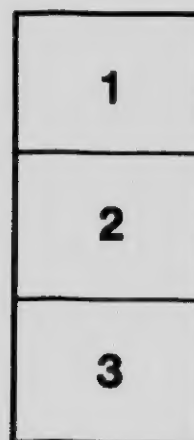
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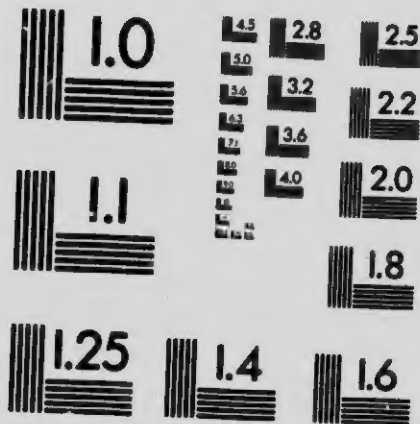
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THE TRAITOR

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THE TRAITOR

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THE TRAITOR

The Traitor

CHAPTER I.

THE CHEQUES.

AT twenty minutes to three on the afternoon of May 10th, 1870, a slimly-built gentleman, about five feet nine inches in height, wearing a heavy moustache and long imperial, entered La Banque de Lyon et de L'Espagne, Paris, and calmly made his way over to one of the paying wickets. From the frequency of the gentleman's nods it was evident that he was well known.

The paying teller, before whom he halted, although for the moment engaged, was not too busy to smile obsequiously to the new arrival, and intimate that he would not keep him waiting long. The gentleman nodded politely, and without appearing in the least to mind the delay, drew from his coat a well-nourished pocket-book, opened it absently, took from it a cheque, and then leaned contentedly on the counter as though not in the slightest hurry.

Scarcely, however, had his elbow touched the counter when the teller, in a somewhat loud voice, said: "I can attend to you now, Monsieur Tourville."

Standing at an adjoining wicket were two gentlemen, and one of them, hearing the name, turned

THE TRAITOR

round, and said, in a rather loud, jesting voice to his companion: "Monsieur Tourville is too busy to notice us to-day."

Strange to say, M. Tourville did not seem to hear the remark, as he did not turn and speak to the gentlemen, who evidently were acquainted with him.

He had heard the teller's voice, however, and had handed him the cheque which he had been twisting around his fingers. The cheque read: "Pay to Gustave Tourville two hundred thousand francs." It was signed "Gustave Tourville."

Although for so large an amount, the teller seemed in no wise surprised, and merely said: "As usual, M. Tourville, in small and large bills?"

"As usual, in small and large bills," he answered.

As was customary, the teller handed the cheque to the ledger-keeper to have the signature inspected and the cheque endorsed for payment. Evidently he did so as a mere matter of form, as he at once began to count out the money. It did not take him many seconds to do so, as attached to each of the large packages were slips showing the amount each contained, and he had merely the totals to add up. When the cheque was returned, verified, he was ready to pay it.

"I think you will find the amounts all right," he said, as he handed over the money.

As though not accustomed to count his money, M. Tourville put the packages in a satchel, and without further remark briskly left the bank. When he passed the two gentlemen he did not look in their

THE CHEQUES

direction, and they laughed with seeming heartiness when he was out of earshot.

Some five minutes later he who was known in the bank as M. Tourville entered hurriedly and said pleasantly, as he handed the same teller a cheque: "I really must try and get into the habit of not coming so near closing time, I shall be too late some of these days and my employees will not get paid, and they will not like that." (It was peculiar of him that he never allowed an employee to cash large cheques.)

A perplexed look crossed the teller's face as he glanced at the cheque. "Two hundred thousand francs, M. Tourville?" he queried, looking up in astonishment.

"Yes, that is the amount I draw every two weeks, as you know." There was a touch of annoyance in his tone.

"But surely, sir, you don't wish to draw two such large amounts in one day?"

"Two such amounts in one day? What do you mean?" Then, without waiting for a reply, he went on, angrily: "This is the first time I have been in the bank to-day. If this is considered a jest it is most unseemly, and I do not appreciate it. Kindly cash my cheque; my time is valuable."

At this extraordinary statement a startled expression shot into the teller's face, and he stood and looked at the speaker as though utterly bereft of words. By this time the attention of the same two gentlemen at the adjoining wicket was attracted, and they looked

THE TRAITOR

curiously at M. Tourville, who leaned suddenly over the counter, and said, furiously, to the teller: "You are mad, sir; hand me my cheque. I will see Monsieur de Tonancourt, the bank manager, at once, and report to him your outrageous conduct."

The threatening tone seemed to restore the teller's presence of mind. Hastily opening a small drawer he drew from it the first cheque for two hundred thousand francs, and with trembling hands laid it before the irate merchant. "There is the cheque you cashed not more than a few minutes ago, the money for which must at this moment be in your satchel."

As though unable to control himself any longer, M. Tourville raised his hand as though he would brush the offending cheque to the floor, when his eyes fell on the signature and date, and then he caught it up and examined it closely.

"Who presented this?" he asked, gravely.

"Monsieur cannot have forgotten that he did."

"And you mean to say you cashed it?"

"Monsieur knows I did, and if he will but open his satchel he—"

His words were cut short by the noise the satchel made as it fell violently on the counter and slid toward him.

He picked it up and opened it eagerly: it was empty.

As he looked up blankly M. Tourville took the satchel from his hands and throwing the cheque, that had just been cashed, into the wicket, said: "That is a forgery, and the bank has lost two hundred thousand francs."

THE CHEQUES

The teller now turned, and pointing to the two gentlemen, who were still listening intently, said: "I remember seeing these gentlemen in the bank when you entered the first time, and I believe they saw me give you the money."

For the first time, M. Tourville looked at the two gentlemen, whom he at once recognized, and bowed to in a friendly manner. He then turning to the teller said: "At the time you mention I was in the Café de la Paix, which is about five minutes walk from here, with three gentlemen. From your insistence that it was I who cashed the cheque, I infer that not only has my name been cleverly forged for this large amount, but I have been as cleverly impersonated. I shall see M. de Tonancourt, the banker, without further delay." He strode away in the direction of the banker's private office.

Being left alone the teller leaned over the counter and said to the two gentlemen: "You will go with me to De Tonancourt's office when I am sent for, and explain just what you saw?"

"I have no objections to going with you," said one of the gentlemen aloud; "have you?" he asked, turning to his friend. "Oh, no," he answered. While they were talking a boy left the banker's office, came up to the teller, and said: "Monsieur de Tonancourt wants you."

As he followed the boy, he turned and beckoned to the two gentlemen, who went with him into the office,

Ten minutes later a detective entered the same office through a side door on an adjoining street.

CHAPTER II.

DETECTIVE PAINCHAUD'S STORY.

WHEN I, Exavier Painchaud, was called on the 10th of May, 1870, to La Banque de Lyon et de L'Espagne, Paris, to investigate the mysterious forging of a cheque for two hundred thousand francs, I had been just six months in the Paris detective department. Before that I belonged to the police department. This was the first important case I had been called to work upon, and, like all young detectives, I was exceedingly anxious to win renown in my profession. Associated with me on the case was one of the most experienced detectives in Paris, who was my dearest friend.

The unravelling of this strange mystery brought a woman into the case which ruined the friendship between us, and finally made criminals of us both. After the lapse of over a quarter of a century I now lay bare the facts of this mystery which attracted so much comment; and also a mystery which arose out of it, neither of which until this day has ever been made public. I would have liked to have carried the secrets to the grave with me, but why I cannot, shall be known.

When I entered the bank manager's private office that memorable afternoon there were present: Henri de Tonancourt, the banker, a thin, clean-shaven, dis-

DETECTIVE PAINCHAUD'S STORY

tinguished looking gentleman, of medium height; Jean Labarge, the paying teller, a small, stout man, with a prominent nose and keen dark eyes; the two gentlemen who had witnessed the paying of the money, Pascal Villers and Telesphore Rivard. Villers was an unusually tall man, nearly six feet two, with very small, watery blue eyes, and thin hair, which he parted carefully in the middle. About Rivard there was nothing particular, except that he stooped badly. The reader is already acquainted with Gustave Tourville, the merchant.

From the serious expression on the men's faces, I judged I was to be given an important case. I was not mistaken. With rapid gestures the teller related how positive he had been that the man he had given the money to had been Monsieur Tourville.

Frequently crossing his long legs and stroking his thin hair, Pascal Villers, one of the two witnesses, told how he had known the merchant for years—as he had also the bank manager—in fact they were all neighbors. He had certainly been under the impression that it had been Monsieur Tourville who had entered the bank the first time; but since Monsieur Tourville had said it was not, of course he must have been mistaken. His friend, Monsieur Rivard, corroborated this statement. He too was a friend of the merchant and of the banker.

As for M. Tourville, the merchant, he had little to say. In a quiet manner he told how he was in the habit of drawing money every two weeks to pay his employees. It was his custom to come to the bank

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about a quarter or ten minutes to three. He also gave me the names of the three gentlemen he had been with in the Café de la Paix, at twenty minutes to three—the time he was supposed to have been in the bank. In brief, he said he had been impersonated and his signature forged.

The manager of the bank, Monsieur de Tonancourt, was naturally anxious to have the mystery solved and the thief captured before he could do away with the money.

After making a few more enquiries, I drove to the office of the prefect of police with the two cheques in my possession.

On learning the gravity of the case, the prefect summoned Detective Vital Jodoin, my friend, who plays such an important part in this history. We were told to unravel the mystery together.

Jodoin was a singularly handsome man of twenty-eight, almost six feet in height, perfectly proportioned, and had muscles as hard as iron. Had he been born as plain a man as I, the feminine temptation which came to him through this case, I believe, would never have beset him.

After discussing the facts, we arrived at the following conclusions: That the impersonator—if there had been one—must have had accomplices, or he would never have dared to cash the cheque so near the time usually chosen by M. Tourville. Again, to have impersonated him so successfully, it would have been necessary for the forger to have been personally acquainted with the merchant.

DETECTIVE PAINCHAUD'S STORY

Who then was the culprit?

Was it possible, despite the seeming respectability of the two witnesses of the crime—Villers and Rivard—that they were not the innocent onlookers they would appear? Again, was it credible that the teller could have been so thoroughly deceived in the appearance of a man he was in the habit of doing business with? Deceived too by his very voice, as he had spoken once—when he said he would take the money in large and small bills. Finally, was it not possible that M. Tourville, the well-known merchant, was not in quite as affluent circumstances as supposed, and was actually the culprit himself? Even if he had impersonated himself we were persuaded he could never have successfully done so without aid. The case, without doubt, was a complex one, and the chances were that it had not been hatched by a single brain. We decided to have one and all of the men carefully watched.

To offset our suspicions against these respectable gentlemen was the fact that at this period were to be found in Paris some of the cleverest forgers and impersonators in the whole world. To positively ascertain if the crime had been committed among this class, happily we had the invaluable informer, Tous-saint Guyot.

CHAPTER III.

TOUSSAINT GUYOT.

THE days passed rapidly, but despite all our efforts the mystery remained tangled enough. There was one clue, however, which we thought held out promising results, and that was, although the teller was socially the inferior of the four suspected men, he had begun to visit at their houses; there was the glaring fact also that he was spending money very freely. We found he had not been born in Paris, nor had he any relations in the city, although a host of friends. We also discovered that the banker and the merchant, M. Tourville, were old friends, and that the loss to the bank had in no way impaired their friendship, but rather increased it. Unfortunately for us, the gentlemen who had been with the merchant in the café at the time the cheque was being cashed could not recall the exact time he left them. Had they only been able to do so, we could have settled the suspicion which naturally attached itself to the merchant.

One thing which troubled Jodoin greatly at this time was the absence of Guyot, the informer, who had not been seen in Paris since the day of the forgery. Although we did not suspect him of the crime, we had to admit that the absence of such a man at such a critical time was either more or less significant.

TOUSSAINT GUYOT

I will now come to the remarkable events which followed each other so rapidly.

The second night after the forgery I was sitting in one of the two rooms Jodoin and I occupied, almost dead for the want of sleep, waiting for Jodoin—who had been all day in the low portions of Paris trying to find Guyot—when I heard his brisk step on the stairs. He entered the room angrily. "It is no use," he said, "I cannot find that scoundrel Guyot. After all, these informers cannot be implicitly trusted."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in."

The door opened noiselessly, and there stood the object of Jodoin's compliments, Toussaint Guyot—one of the shrewdest rascals in the whole of Paris. He was of medium height, spare, with a yellow complexion, and dull, expressionless eyes. Unlike most of his class he had received a fair education. Jodoin had enough of evidence against the man to send him to the Conciergerie for a score of years; but decoys are just as valuable to detectives as they are to sportsmen. Such rogues are used by detectives the world over.

"Sit down," said Jodoin, curtly. Guyot slid on a chair as noiselessly as a cat.

"Now where have you been?"

"To Maisonneuve to see my mother, who is sick."

"I don't believe you," said Jodoin curtly.

The fellow glanced up quickly and smiled apologetically—I may have been mistaken, but I thought I caught something of the lurking devil in that look.

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"However," continued Jodoin (he had realized he was not acting wisely), "I can verify in a day or two the truth of what you say. I have been anxious to see you, Guyot; I suppose you know what for?"

"I can guess; you wanted to ask me if I knew who forged the cheque on the Banque de Lyon et de L'Espagne." The listless manner in which he spoke conveyed the impression that he could throw no light on the affair.

"Yes, that is what I wanted you for," answered Jodoin, turning his back upon him as though his room was now preferable to his company.

"I was going to say that I thought I knew the forger."

Jodoin wheeled suddenly round, and said in a voice which trembled with excitement: "If you can do that, Guyot, you shall be paid handsomely."

Leaning back, Guyot said, a little bitterly: "I don't want your money; I want to try and get out of your power. You once did me a good turn, for which ever since you have kept the lash hanging over me. Now, if one more piece of treachery to those who trust me will even things up between us, I don't mind telling you what I know of the case."

We both bent eagerly over the table to listen.

"You remember Pierre Lisotte, the forger and impersonator?" he began.

"Yes, he is serving a fourteen years' sentence for forgery," Jodoin replied.

"Then he has now served about—?"

TOUSSAINT GUYOT

"About ten years," answered Jodoin, restlessly.

Without paying the slightest attention to his impatience, Guyot went on: "And so he would have had four more years to serve. I suppose you have heard of his escape, the day before this cheque was cashed?"

"We have not; we have been too busy on this case to do much gossiping with the officers."

"Yes, of course—well, he has been to see me."

It was hard for us to exhibit no surprise; but we offered no comment.

"He came to my house in Les Batignolles the midnight of the day he escaped. I was surprised, but I took him in. He said he had come to me because he had heard I could be trusted. When he told me of the terrible ten years he had put in, in the Conciergerie, I had a real feeling of pity for him. He said he had made arrangements with an old companion to escape from France, but that he needed a safe place to hide for a few days. It was my duty, of course, to have betrayed him, but I thought I would do one good deed in my life, and so took him and promised to help him to escape. As I had to go away in the morning to see my mother, I showed him a hiding-place in the house where he would be safe till I returned. If you remember, Lisotte was not unlike, in appearance, the merchant, M. Tourville, who was impersonated."

He paused and looked at Jodoin, who, after thinking for a few moments, said: "I only remember seeing Lisotte once, and as to his exact appearance I cannot be sure. I can recall, though, that he was a

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clean-shaven man with reddish hair; while M. Tourville has gray hair, a heavy gray moustache and imperial. What are you trying to—?”

“You will soon learn what I am trying to do,” interrupted Guyot, for the first time exhibiting symptoms of excitement. “As I have said,” he continued, “Lisotte’s figure was not unlike M. Tourville’s. Now, suppose he got a wig exactly like the hair worn by M. Tourville, attached to his lip a gray moustache and to his chin a gray imperial, used cosmetics to make the color of his skin like M. Tourville’s, and, finally, secured a suit of clothes like his, and (after a companion had stationed himself at the door of the bank to watch) had entered the bank at the time usually chosen by the merchant, and presented the cheque, forged as you know only Lisotte could forge a cheque, would you think it wonderful if it was accepted and cashed?”

By way of reply Jodoin quietly rose, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and then walking over to Guyot looked him squarely in the eyes and said: “You seem to forget, Guyot, that you, too, with the disguises you have mentioned, and with the information you seem to possess of the merchant, might have acted the very part which you have attributed to Lisotte—with the exception of forging the cheque, which, perhaps, your crafty brain could, if it were taxed, have accomplished in some way. Now, I will be frank with you; unless you thoroughly explain this mystery I shall keep you till we can fully investigate the facts of the strange story you have unfolded.”

TOUSSAINT GUYOT

Guyot exhibited no apprehension at the grave turn affairs had taken for him, and said, quietly: "Of course, I might have played the part, as you say; but I did not. Is it likely that if I had, and after getting that sum, I should have been here exposing myself so foolishly, and waiting until your unjust suspicions can be got under control till I can continue and tell you how you may find the forger? Even supposing I had played the part of the man who watched at the bank door till the cheque was cashed, would it have been any the less dangerous for me to have sought you out? Was there not enough money got to do two a lifetime?"

Of course this was mere argument, but the reasonableness of it appealed to Jodoin and he replied: "Of course, I only need proof that you are not mixed up in the affair, Guyot. If you can tell us who the guilty party is that will settle the whole question." He spoke somewhat apologetically as he realized that he should have let him complete his story before he took any action. It is wonderful how the want of sleep will upset the strongest man's nerves, and make him act at times as he would otherwise never dream of doing; and Jodoin had not slept for two nights.


Guyot's face set in hard lines as though he were deeply annoyed at such suspicious treatment. "If you will open the door," he said suddenly, "I will show you something that will make you suspect me more, Monsieur Jodoin."

Jodoin handed over the key, as though he now had the utmost confidence in him.

THE TRAITOR

Opening the door, Guyot went into the outer passage, took up a good sized bundle and brought it into the room. "I left it out there," he said, as he laid it on the table, "as I did not want you to know its contents till I had spoken to you. From the suspicious manner in which you have treated me it is well I took this precaution."

Before unfastening the cord which bound the bundle he went to the door, quietly locked it, and then laid the key at Jodoin's side. This voluntarily placing himself at our mercy spoke strongly in his favor. Quickly untying the string there was revealed a gray moustache, a wig and imperial, a small box of cosmetics, a suit of clothes and a letter. Opening the letter he said: "Had it not been for this I should never have dared to show you, or any one else, these things." He handed the letter to Jodoin, who opened it. It read as follows: "*Cher* Guyot, I leave these things in the hiding-place in your room for you to destroy. I would have destroyed them myself but there was no fire in the room. You will have no trouble in guessing what I used the things for as the whole of Paris will be talking about the affair when you find them. If you had not insisted on going to see your mother the morning after you took me in, I would have explained all to you and have got you to help us. I had a companion—whom, I cannot tell you. I met him before I came to your house, and he proposed the job. It was dangerous, but I was willing to risk my liberty, once more, for a fortune. He knew you, and told me I would be safer at your



TOUSSAINT GUYOT

place than any other till the morning. Soon after you left he came with the disguises. He seemed glad to find you were out. He had also a paper bearing M. Tourville, the merchant's name. In less than an hour I could write it as perfectly as M. Tourville himself. It was lucky for me that in general build I was like Monsieur Tourville. After I had got fixed up in the clothes and things, the merchant would have sworn I was his ghost. My companion had everything arranged. He knew that M. Tourville always went to the bank at about a quarter to three. Happily for us it chanced to be the very day he was in the custom of cashing his cheque to pay his employees. My companion saw M. Tourville go into the Café de la Paix at twenty-five minutes to three and then hurried to meet me at the bank, which I entered at twenty minutes to three. There was not much danger of my being surprised, as he watched at the door, and would have signalled me if M. Tourville had been coming. After all, it was the easiest thing I ever did. I will write you in a few days, and let you know the place I am going to. When I get there, I will send you money to come too, as I hear you, too, are sick of Paris. I am so proud of that signature that I cannot help letting you see a copy of it." Then followed the forged signature of Gustave Tourville, and at the end of the letter, in the same writing as the letter, the signature: "Pierre Lisotte."

With an eager exclamation, Jodoin compared the forged signature in the letter with the signatures on the two cheques—in every detail and character they

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were exactly the same. Guyot was vindicated! We knew he could never have done that; besides, his betrayal of the man placed him above suspicion.

"You have acted splendidly," said Jodoin to him, "and now all you have to do is, the moment that letter arrives from Lisotte saying where he is going, to bring it to us, and it will not be long before we have him back again in the Conciergerie and this mystery cleared up."

"So soon as the letter arrives I will bring it to you," said Guyot, in his old placid manner, as he rose to go. The key was still at Jodoin's side, and with a queer expression on his face, Guyot stood and looked at it.

Jodoin noticed the look, and handing him the key, said: "There, forget that little suspicion of mine, Guyot."

"Oh, I was not thinking of that," he said, as he unlocked the door. We listened to his soft footfalls till they finally ceased, and then we lay down and slept heavily.

CHAPTER IV.

FOLLOWING THE CLUE.

Even after the lapse of all these years I can vividly recall the pride I experienced, the day following this eventful night, as I stood in the presence of that august person, the prefect of police, and listened to the words of commendation and promise which fell from his lips. Even Jodoin flushed with pride. We did not tell him whom we suspected, but said we believed we were now on the track of the forger. He was extremely anxious that we should succeed, and told us to spare neither time nor expense in following up the clue.

And all this we owed to the informer, Guyot; for he had been true to his promise and had brought us the longed-for letter from the escaped convict the very day after his betrayal of him.

"It has come," he had said simply, as he handed us the precious letter. The envelope bore the London postmark and was dated May 11th—the day after the forgery. At a glance we could see that the hand that had penned the letter which we had read the previous evening had also written this. It read:

"*Cher Guyot.* As I told you I would, I write to let you know where I intend to escape to. I leave London to-day for Mexico. I shall be safe there, as France can only get from that country people who

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have committed murder. I shall have to take the steamer first to New York and from there a steamer to Mexico. I hear I may have to stay in New York a few days before I can get a steamer to Mexico. I shall be careful, and travel as I think safest. I am now dressed in a black suit, have fine black hair, long whiskers and blue glasses. I have also become a little lame and have a cough, and so am travelling for my health. I shall send you the money I promised as soon as I get to Mexico."

The letter was signed, "Pierre Lisotte." It was after getting this letter that we went to the prefect and told him that we were on the track of the forger, but that we might have to travel many miles to get him.

For various reasons, Jodoin had deemed it wiser not to come into contact with any of the men who were in the banker's office the day I was summoned there, so that all direct enquiries, thus far, had been made by me. From what is to follow, it will be seen that this precaution of Jodoin's was a wise one.

After leaving the prefect's office I went alone to the office of M. de Tonancourt, the banker, and acquainted him with the important turn affairs had taken. He received me courteously, and his pale face lighted up as he read the remarkable letters and compared M. Tourville's forged signature in them with the signatures on the cheques.

"There can be no doubt," he said at last, eagerly, "but that the escaped forger Lisotte is the guilty party, and he must be arrested at all hazards."

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"But if he gets to Mexico before we can arrest him, what are we to do?" I asked, to see what answer he would give.

"But you will arrest him before he gets there," he replied confidently. Then he looked grave and said: "If he should manage to elude you and get there, of course that would be the end of the case, and he would thwart us, after all."

"He might not; there would be still a way of getting him to France—and without, too, the knowledge of the Mexican Government," I answered.

"How?" he queried with considerable surprise.

"By kidnapping him!"

The words had a strange effect upon him. "By kidnapping him?" he asked, with knitted brows.

"I will explain," I went on. "My plan is this. If he reaches Mexico, I intend to try to lure him to Vera Cruz—a shipping port at which French vessels stop. It is one hundred and seventy-three miles from the city of Mexico. The journey from Vera Cruz to Mexico is a famous one, on account of its scenery, and is largely patronized by tourists. The convict has never seen me, and as soon as I reach Mexico I shall make it my duty to cultivate his acquaintance. After we become friendly I shall suggest that we both take this pleasure trip, and I think it is not likely the proposal will arouse any suspicion. If there should be a French vessel at Vera Cruz the day we reach there, I shall try, on one pretext or another, to lure him on board. The prefect is to give me letters to any French captain

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I may need to assist me, and once Lisotte is on board one of our country's vessels the probabilities are that he will not leave it till he reaches France. Detectives, you see, M. de Tonancourt, have often to adopt queer means in order that the ends of justice may be achieved." I thought he would have been pleased with the scheme, yet to my surprise he did not appear so. He must, I think, have noted my surprise, for the peculiar expression fled from his face, and he said, lightly: "An excellent scheme. I was just thinking, though, that I would not like you to do anything that might lead to any international complications."

I assured him that I would take good care that no such complications should arise.

As we walked to the door he shook hands with me, and said brightly: "Then, Monsieur, I shall expect to see the forger with you when you return."

As I turned from the bank I jostled against Pascal Villers and Telesphore Rivard, the witnesses of the crime. They did not appear to have noticed me and so I hurried on; but some impulse presently made me turn round, and there was Villers pointing his long, lean finger at me, and saying something to his companion. They both evidently remembered me.

Two hours later Jodoin and I started for London, *en route* for New York—and, if need be, for Mexico.

The Fates now seemed to vie with each other to crown our efforts with success. The second shipping office we enquired at in London, gave us the information that a man, exactly answering the description given of himself by Lisotte in the letter, had on the

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afternoon of May the 11th bought a ticket for New York, via the *British Queen*. The ticket seller remembered the man having said something about Mexico to him. Our way was now clear, and we telegraphed the superintendent of police in New York to have the forger, whom he described, arrested on the arrival of the *British Queen*, and to detain him till we arrived on the *Cumberland City*.

Just as we were leaving London we got a telegram from the prefect of police, Paris, saying that M. Tourville, the merchant, had given out that he was about to retire from business.

The trip over the Atlantic seemed scarcely longer than a day to us—had we known what was before us it would have been unbearable.

On reaching New York we were told that no man answering Lisotte's description had been found on the *British Queen*.

We decided that the rogue must, after getting on board, have assumed another disguise and had thus escaped detection. We determined to at once put the kidnapping scheme into operation, and took the steamer the same night for Vera Cruz, and from there, three days later, the train to Mexico City. Everything now depended upon diplomacy, for unless we could allure the rascal to Vera Cruz our whole journey would be a failure.

The sun was just setting when the train descended the lofty Orizada mountain, and we saw, away down in the valley, the picturesque city of Mexico, with its quaint awnings, magnificent sacred edifices, broad

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streets and green squares, all hemmed in by lofty sierras.

For three days we haunted all the squares and hotels, in the hope of finding Lisotte, but to no avail. The evening of the fourth day we were sitting in the beautiful Plaza de Armas, absorbed in bitter reflections, when a boy hurried up and handed Jodoin a cablegram. As he read it he uttered an exclamation of dismay and handed it to me. It was from the prefect of police, and read:

"Lisotte was captured in Paris five days ago in the direst poverty, and dying from hunger and disease. He had no more to do with the forgery than you had. Return without delay."

As we had not been able to find Lisotte, we had cabled the prefect, and this was his reply.

The falling waters of the fountains around us seemed to have been transformed into a thousand mocking voices.

"This means—"

"Yes, this means," interrupted Jodoin harshly, "that we have been deceived by that villainous Guyot, the informer."

Scarcely were the words uttered when there fell upon our ears the sound of approaching feet; we ceased talking till the intruder should have passed on. A shadow fell across the bench; we looked up.

I thought I must have gone suddenly insane; for there, passing in front of us, was the man whom the prefect had said was dead; the man whom we had travelled nearly ten thousand miles to see—Pierre

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Lisotte, escaped convict and forger! There was no mistaking the man, for there was the black suit, the long, black whiskers, the halting step and blue eyeglasses.

"There are mysteries," Jodoin whispered, "connected with this case that will tax all our skill." There was no time now, however, to discuss the enigma, and we arose indolently to try and engage him in conversation. We knew it was not likely that he would know either of us, yet for safety's sake we had disguised ourselves.

"A fine night, Monsieur," said Jodoin, as we reached his side.

The convict looked up through his thick blue glasses, and replied, in a friendly tone: "Yes, a very fine night." He was quite hoarse and wore a scarf around his neck.

"Ah! I am glad to hear you speak French," said Jodoin, in a pleased tone.

"Oh, yes, I am French, and am travelling for my health," he said, fumbling at his scarf. "I have had a cough for years, and it has almost taken my voice away," he continued huskily.

Knowing his hoarseness was assumed, I could not help a feeling of amusement at this explanation. But why should he continue to use all these precautions now, when he could have snapped his fingers at all the detectives in Paris? For some reason or other he evidently did not think himself quite safe after all.

He was very friendly, and told us that he had only

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arrived that evening, and that he had left London on the steamer *Warwick*.

We knew this vessel had not been booked to leave London till three days after we had sailed, and so now understood how it was we had missed him. But why he had not sailed on the vessel he had written he intended to, we were still unaware.

He said he was glad we were French—he seemed not to have the slightest suspicion of us. Before long we were dwelling upon the beautiful scenery between the city of Mexico and the city of Vera Cruz. To our gratification he said he had not noticed the scenery as he came along from Vera Cruz as he had been too unwell, but intended, in a few days, to go over the route again. He had fallen into the trap easier than we ever had hoped!

After conversing for nearly a quarter of an hour he excused himself and said he would go to his hotel. We offered to accompany him, but he politely declined the proposal, and, turning abruptly, limped off down a shady path. As we shadowed him to his hotel, there was something in his walk, disguised though it was, that was strangely familiar to me.

Try as we might for the next few days we could not get a glimpse of him, except at night in the Plaza de Armas, where he always chose the most shady seats. We had now become quite friendly. Finally, Jodoin carelessly told him one hot night that we intended to take the trip to Vera Cruz the following morning, and asked him if he would like to accompany us. He fell in with the proposition readily, and even asked

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us to purchase three tickets that night, to save us waiting at the station to get them in the morning. As he made the request his hoarseness was more accentuated than usual, and he fumbled in a peculiar way with his glasses.

While we had been talking, a sudden change had taken place in the weather. The wind had veered suddenly to the south, and was covering the sky with clouds that looked ominous with rain.

Jodoin cast a glance aloft, anxiously—I knew he dreaded the weather was going to spoil our plans.

"After you have bought the tickets," our acquaintance wheezed, "you might come to my hotel to-night and have a chat; it is not late yet and—" a dazzling ray of light, followed by a deafening report, prevented us from hearing the remainder of the sentence.

In the silence which followed Jodoin said, hopefully: "The storm is sure to be over before the morning."

"You are right, the storm *will* be over before morning," he answered in a tone so full of significance that I involuntarily bent my head and tried to peer through the thick glasses. As I did so he turned and vanished into the darkness.

An hour later we were being shown to his room in the hotel. As he opened the door in answer to our knock, a blinding flash of lightning shot through the two bay windows of his chamber, and distinctly lit up one side of his face. Disguised though it was, I could have sworn I had seen it somewhere before. The most appalling bursts of thunder now followed

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each other in rapid succession, making the windows rattle dismally in their loose frames.

He pointed to two chairs standing near a table in the centre of the room, on which stood a lamp that threw dim shadows around.

"You have made all the arrangements for our trip to Vera Cruz to-morrow?" he asked slowly.

"Yes, everything is arranged," said Jodoin lightly.

"And you have got the tickets?"

"Yes, three."

"Then, *Monsieur Jodoin*, you can take the third one to Paris, and give it to the prefect of police, and ask him to come over to Mexico and take the trip himself with you!"

His huskiness had all fled, and, while speaking, he had bereft his face of its disguises.

We sprang to our feet with cries of anger. Jodoin, with fury in his eyes, would have sprung upon him had I not seized him by the shoulder.

"Lay a hand on me and I will shoot!" said the rascal, in a determined voice, covering us with his revolver. And Jodoin knew that Toussaint Guyot, the informer, would not now hesitate at any cost to carry out the desperate rôle he had essayed.

In his old, cat-like manner, he stepped a little to one side, and said: "You would both be fools to try to injure me now."

Stretching out his clenched hand, Jodoin said bitterly: "Curse you, Guyot, for this treachery!"

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In a tone of intense hatred, Guyot replied: "Monsieur Jodoin, I am now in a position where I can defy you. Because you once spared me in Paris you made my life not worth living; you never let me forget that I was at your mercy. Through my acts of treachery to those who trusted me you have got credit for scores of arrests; but I think the honor you will get out of this case will not be pleasant to remember. Now, let me tell you that it was I who forged and passed that cheque."

Jodoin had now got control of himself, and said quietly: "I know it would make your despicable revenge on the man who saved you from ten years' imprisonment sweeter if you thought he believed that, but I do not; you are no penman, and could not have forged the cheque. I see it all now; you are the decoy to draw suspicion away from those who are the most guilty; but you have failed in your rôle, after all."

As we passed out, his mocking laugh came floating after us: "What I tell you is true, I did forge it. And, don't forget, that third ticket is for the prefect of police."

By nine o'clock the next morning we were once more travelling up the sides of the Orizada Mountain. From the turn events had taken, it would have been utterly useless to have remained in Mexico any longer, even if extradition had been possible, and we knew that it was not. We still disbelieved Guyot's assertion that he was the forger. The influence behind the fellow, however, had evidently been most

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powerful, and we did not forget that we had been drawn away from Paris when we were busily engaged in trying to find out whether or not any of the parties who were in the banker's office when I was summoned, had any guilty knowledge of the crime.

The day was not far distant when our humiliation was to be turned into triumph; but such a triumph! It was to be as bitter as death itself to me. And with it comes the woman in the case.

CHAPTER V.

THE WOMAN IN THE CASE.

It was the night before we reached London. I was lying in my berth, trying to read, while Jodoin was examining, through a microscope, M. Tourville's name on the cheques, and in the letters brought us by the treacherous informer, Guyot—and supposed to have been signed by Lisotte the escaped forger.

Suddenly Jodoin hurried to my side, and said eagerly, as he handed me the microscope: "Look at the difference there is now in the color of the ink of the signatures."

To my surprise I saw that while the signature on the uncashed cheque still retained its ordinary common black shade, the signature on the cashed one had turned a peculiar reddish hue. To the naked eye the reddish hue was not discernible, but, seen through a microscope, it was quite distinct. The writing in the body of both the letters given us by Guyot had also turned this peculiar shade. I saw the value of the discovery at once; there was now a strong presumption that the person who had signed the merchant's name to the cheque which drew the money, was the same who had penned the letters supposed to have been written by the escaped forger. It was hardly likely that M. Tourville, the merchant, was the guilty party; he would hardly have thought of using

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a different kind of ink on the forged cheque, when, only after the lapse of weeks, and then but with the aid of a microscope, any difference could be found—in brief, he could not have had any object in doing so. The cheque he had presented, and of which the teller refused payment, alone had not changed color.

"This is a strong argument in favor of M. Tourville's innocence, and somewhat narrows down the case," I said.

"I agree with you so far as the merchant is concerned," Jodoin said, "but the discovery greatly increases our chances of eventually unravelling the mystery. If this unusual shade of ink is used by any of the men we suspect, it will be a powerful clue. It should not be hard to learn if Villers and Rivard, the witnesses of the cashing of the cheque, use the tell-tale ink, nor should it be hard to ascertain if the teller or the merchant uses it. We know that all these men are mixed up in the affair, and in my heart I believe that one or more of them, in some strange way, is guilty of the crime; and, learning we were on the right scent, got Guyot to lead us off on this wild-goose chase."

We sat up for hours discussing plans that were to bring us to the goal we so longed to reach.

Although our reception by the prefect was kind, we knew that he felt deeply chagrined over the adroitness of Guyot; naturally we were now more determined than ever to succeed.

Two days after our return I got important information regarding the colors of the inks. A prominent

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chemist to whom I had given the cheques and the letters reported that the reddish tinge on the cheque which had been cashed, and in the letters, had been caused by adding to ink a few drops of *ferrocyanide of potassium and hydrochloric acid*. Dropped into any ink, this compound would cause it to flow more freely, and prevent it from thickening so readily. But, at the same time, it would, after the lapse of a few weeks, give the ink a reddish tinge, noticeable only through a microscope. The shade was a most peculiar one, and the chemist was under the impression that the compound had been used in this instance simply to make the ink flow easier, and not with the intention of making any alteration in its color. On examining the ink on the cheque which had not been cashed and which, as stated, had not changed color, he had found that it was an ordinary black ink, made out of iron and gall, and had not had any foreign compound added to it.

While I was making these inquiries Jodoin was playing an important part. In accordance with the plans we had mapped out, he had introduced himself to the banker, M. de Tonancourt, as a stranger from the south of France with considerable means, a member of an old, respectable family, and exceedingly anxious to get an insight into banking and general business methods. His two shrewdly concocted letters, bearing out his assertions of heavy respectability, made his mission successful, and he was not only allowed access to the bank, but asked by M. de Tonancourt to visit him at his house. The banker

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also introduced him to the teller, and to the two witnesses of the cashing of the cheque—Rivard and Villers. He also made the acquaintance of the merchant, M. Tourville—who had now retired—and visited him at his home.

As I have said, Jodoin had not come into contact with any of the men prior to our return, and thus it was comparatively easy for him to carry out his rôle; nevertheless, he took the precaution to disguise himself, and did it perfectly. It may be interesting to explain that in no other city in the world were detectives so systematically drilled in the art of disguises as in Paris. There were officers who were given only cases where frequent disguises were necessary.

For three weeks Jodoin worked hard without getting any clue as to whether any of the suspected men used the reddish ink referred to; his patience was finally rewarded.

Late one afternoon I met him in our rooms, and he handed me an ordinary account book, and said: "Look at the figures and writing in that through the microscope."

I could have shouted for joy; for there before me in the book was the peculiar reddish shade of ink we had longed so to find.

"I also found this," he continued, handing me a small phial; "it was on the desk of the man who did the writing in the book." The phial was labelled: *Ferrocyanide of potassium, hydrochloric acid.*

"And the owner of the book is—?" I asked eagerly.

"Turn to the flyleaf and you will find his name."

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I did so, and when I saw who it was I sprang to my feet with a cry of genuine astonishment. "Impossible! Above all men surely he is not the forger?" I asked aghast.

"I was surprised as you are," he answered with a note of excitement in his voice, "but I have not the slightest doubt now, but that he is the man we want. He has been in the habit of using that acid for years, to keep the ink from getting thick. We shall find, I believe, too, he not only wrote the cheque which drew the money, but that it was actually he who presented it, and that it was he, too, who penned those letters supposed to have been written by the escaped convict, Lisotte. I believe also, that he was assisted in the scheme by the teller, who is still living very expensively, besides being a constant visitor at the houses of those whom we suspect. Over one of the men—and it is strange that it should be the very man on whose desk I found these tell-tale things—the teller appears to have some peculiar influence.

"We shall yet, I think, see that the teller's marked fear on being told that he had cashed the wrong cheque was not genuine."

While Jodoin talked he walked quickly to and fro, and it gradually dawned upon me that there was something strangely restless about him—a restlessness not caused by his discoveries.

"I have cultivated the teller's acquaintance until we are now almost inseparable," he continued; "and I have found that despite his shrewdness he has a

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cowardly disposition, and to save his skin he would sacrifice his own mother. I intend to take the fullest advantage of this trait in his character, and try to terrify him into a confession. My belief is, that if he were arrested and made to believe the forger had been taken into custody before him, and that by confessing he might save himself, he would take the bait without any trouble; especially if he was somewhat under the influence of wine.

"In a day or two I hope we shall be able to rehearse a little drama for him, which I feel sure will not fail to put the winning card of this case into our hands."

He minutely described his scheme, and I was pleased with its ingenuity. Not once did he look me in the face while talking—a most unusual thing with him—and when he had concluded he left me abruptly.

The days slipped by and began to get into weeks, and still Jodoin was not ready to put his plan into operation—although more than one opportunity to do so had presented itself. I could not resist a feeling of apprehension; for the strange restlessness which I have referred to became more marked in him every day.

Finally, by chance, I learned its secret. I found him sitting one night with his elbows resting on the table, and his face pillowed in his hands. He did not hear me enter the room, and thinking he was asleep, I walked quietly over to him. On reaching his side I found he was not asleep, but was looking at a photograph, which was lying in front of him on the

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table, of one of the most beautiful young women my eyes ever rested upon. When he heard my voice he turned the photograph face downwards, but he utterly failed to drive out of his eyes the lovelight in them, or prevent the conscious flush, from mounting to his brow.

"Who is she, Jodoin?" I asked, playfully.

The simple question caused his face to grow suddenly pale, and the strange restlessness to return.

With a queer look, he replied: "She is a wealthy young lady of good position, with whom I have become acquainted while working on this case."

"You have fallen in love with her, Jodoin?"

"God help me! yes, I have," he answered, burying his face in his hands, "and she does not know of my love."

"And the family of the lady?"

He was silent for some time. Finally he said in a repressed voice: "She is the daughter of *one of the men who is mixed up in this case.*"

He did not say which man's daughter she was, but at once I realized the sinister position he had placed himself in, and pointed out how such a complication might ruin the whole case, and how, even if it should not, it could bring nothing but misery to him; as it was not likely, when she learned that he was Detective Jodoin, that she would want to bestow her affections upon him, seeing how he had worked to bring sorrow to her father. I also appealed strongly to his professional instincts, and brought

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back to his memory Guyot, and the Mexican episode that we had yet to wipe out.

This latter home-thrust brought him to his feet, and he said bitterly: "It is only right that you should know that my love for this girl is indeed a terrible menace to the success of the case."

Seeing my anxiety he stretched out his hand impulsively, and said: "You and I, Painchaud, have worked hard on this mystery, and I give you my word of honor that I will go on with it whatever the cost to myself. This love has made a terrible coward of me during the past month, but I am done with it now, and to-morrow night we will put the plans we have discussed into operation."

He spoke with such feverish haste that I could not help feeling that should this beautiful girl throw the witchery of her beauty and affection against his word of honor and ambition, they would be put to rout.

Fearing to create an impression that I doubted him, and thus weaken his resolutions, I shook the outstretched hand cordially. We then completed the details of the plan we were to put into operation on the morrow.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNDOING OF PAYING TELLER LABARGE.

THE Café de la Paix is one of the most gorgeous in Paris. One would think from the way it is thronged both day and night, that privacy would be utterly unknown in it; yet such is not the case. The two rooms we had hired, on the third story, were as quiet and secluded as if this great city had only been a provincial town. I mention this because, had they not been so secluded, they would never have done for the entertainment mapped out for Labarge, the paying teller of La Banque de Lyon et de L'Espagne.

We feared to choose a humbler café, lest he should find his surroundings uncongenial, be less liable to partake freely of the sparkling white wine, and thus be better able to undergo the trying ordeal in store for him.

Adjoining the largest room, where lunch had been spread for two, was an ante-room; both rooms were connected by a door, and Jodoin was to see that it was not quite closed.

It was shortly after seven, and the lights had just been lit, when I saw from a shady corner of the café, Jodoin enter with Labarge, the paying teller, who was already apparently in a joyful mood. I signalled to another shadowy form in an opposite corner, and together at a distance we followed them up the broad

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stairway. As they sat down at the table we entered the ante-room. Presently the clinking of glasses and laughter floated to us, and then I turned to the man at my side, who bore no slight resemblance to one of the men who was present in the bank manager's office when I was summoned to investigate the case.

It had been difficult to get a man who resembled this particular man, but I had succeeded at last. It was true that in features he was not strikingly like him, but after I had turned the light low, and as he sat in the middle of the room, with his face buried dejectedly in his hands, anyone at a distance would have taken him to have been the man we wanted him to counterfeit—and it was only from a distance that we intended the teller to see him.

Nearly an hour had slipped by, and the festive sounds had become more marked, when Jodoin suddenly bent forward, and said to Labarge: "You have heard I suppose that Monsieur ——has been arrested for forging that two hundred thousand franc cheque?"

Had he pressed a poniard to the half-drunken man's breast, the laughter could not have died from his lips more suddenly, nor the terror in his eyes have been greater.

Jodoin gave him no time to recover, but went on pitilessly: "And he had accomplices, too." He stooped quickly, and drew from under the table the disguises which the treacherous informer Guyot had pretended the escaped convict Lisotte had worn, and laid them on the table.

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As the unhappy man's eyes fell on the gray wig, moustache, imperial and clothing, his hands tightened convulsively on the arms of his chair, and he made a feeble effort to rise; but sank back as Jodoin again began to speak, this time in a significant tone: "You knew the forger wore these things when he passed the cheque, and I arrest you for complicity in the case. I am Detective Jodoin." He laid his hand authoritatively on the teller's shoulder.

Labarge now sprang to his feet, his face livid with fear. The wine he had taken robbed him of even the least semblance of control. The critical moment had now arrived, and I swung the ante-room door open, and walking over to the culprit, said: "I am sorry, but you, too, must come with me."

He paid no attention to me but gazed in mute fear and despair at the wretched-looking man in the shadowy ante-room.

"He has confessed," I said coolly, "and the case against you both is clear."

He never doubted for a moment but that the man was the forger.

The exposing of the secret he had guarded so jealously had been so sudden, and the startling events had followed each other so quickly that he was completely prostrated. "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" he gasped, and then broke into a fit of tears.

Even with the wine he had taken, I could not have believed he would have been so utterly devoid of courage, and I realized that Jodoin's opinion of the man had not been astray, and that he was a thorough

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coward. His collapse was almost pitiful; he fairly grovelled before us, and, like a frightened boy, begged for mercy.

"There is one way whereby you may escape punishment, or at least be let off with a nominal sentence," said Jodoin, as though struck by a sudden inspiration.

"How?" he asked, with a gleam of hope.

"By signing a written confession. As you see there, the forger is already arrested and has confessed; and although we could do without your confession, it would tell strongly in your favor."

"Give me pen and paper," he said, tremblingly.

Twenty minutes later, there was in our hands the precious document, which to us meant triumph and honor, and to others such terrible misery and dishonor. We had triumphed, it is true, by cunning; but detectives have not to plan to run to earth honorable men.

Apparently, the case was now all but completed, there remaining but the arrest of the real forger, on the confession of his accomplice. Simple as the case looked, there were to arise complications which, could I have foreseen, I would have torn into a thousand fragments the coveted confession.

Jodoin suddenly took out his watch. "Ah! it is half-past eight," he said, in an eager tone.

"The hour we were to have left for the ball at M. de Tonancourt's, the banker's," said Labarge, wretchedly.

"I am sorry for you," said Jodoin.

"When the guests arrive and are told of our

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arrests, the sensation will be terrible," he went on weakly.

Jodoin knew the subject of the ball was not a safe one, and signalled me to get rid of our confederate in the ante-room, which I did, and the three of us then sauntered out to the café, as though nothing unusual had happened. On reaching the street, however, we hurried Labarge into a carriage, and took him direct to our private rooms, where we had decided to keep him till the final arrest was made.

Being an invited guest at the house where he had to make the final arrest, Jodoin's task was now a trying one. He decided to try to get the forger out of the banker's house, if possible, without any of the other guests being the wiser. Twelve o'clock was the time for the apprehension. In order that I might know that help was not necessary, Jodoin was to let a handkerchief, as though by accident, fall from one of the ball-room windows. If, however, he needed help, he was to wave the handkerchief.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAITOR.

It was a little before midnight when I arrived with two officers at the stately house of Henri de Tonancourt, manager of the bank, which was in the most fashionable part of Paris, the Faubourg St. Germain. Soft strains were stealing out of the windows. One of the ball-room windows fronted on the side of the house, near which grew a large tree, and it was from this window that I was to receive the signal.

It was tiresome standing and looking up, so, stationing my men at the back of the house, I climbed the tree; I then, through the open window, could command a view of the ball-room, and also a small reception room.

The first person I saw glide past the window was Jodoin, and on his arm was the regal girl I had seen in the photograph.

Farther down the room I saw four men standing together, and recognized them as Henri de Tonancourt, M. Tourville the merchant, Pascal Villers and Telesphore Rivard, the two witnesses. *One of the quartette was the forger.* I could not help a feeling of pity, as I thought of how dizzy his fall was to be; but the kindly feelings were soon to be swept away.

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My attention was drawn from the men by seeing Jodoin enter the reception-room with the lady. From the position I was in, I could see and hear them quite plainly. For a few moments they stood in the centre of the room admiring a magnificent vase of roses. Then, I saw her stoop and bury her face in the flowers, and, as she did so, I saw Jodoin look at her with such a love in his eyes as I had never thought him capable of. I never saw him look handsomer than he did that night.

As she raised her head he stooped and impulsively pressed his lips to the flowers. Their eyes met, and she turned her head quickly, as though to hide her emotion. He stepped towards her, and I believe would have gathered her in his arms had not a clock in the vicinity attracted his attention; he started visibly and listened. It struck twelve—the hour he was to have made the arrest. I could see he was sorely agitated as he offered her his arm and took her back to the ball-room.

I found myself now holding my breath with suspense for what I knew was going to happen. After finding her a seat he sauntered over to Henri de Tonancourt, manager of La Banque de Lyon et de L'Espagne, and spoke to him.

He bowed, and they both walked carelessly up the room. As they entered the reception-room, De Tonancourt said: "I hope the communication that Monsieur has for me is a pleasant one."

Jodoin's lips were pale, but firmly set. "I regret," he said, "that it is not, and that I have to

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arrest you for forging M. Tourville's name to the cheque for two hundred thousand francs, which was cashed on May 10th, and also for impersonating him. I have deceived you as to my personality; I am Detective Jodoin. I have here the written confession of Jean Labarge, the teller, your accomplice, as well as the forged cheque and the two letters you wrote and credited Lisotte the convict with. Were it not that Guyot, the informer, another of your accomplices, is in Mexico, where you sent him, he, too, would have been arrested." As Jodoin stepped to the window to give me the signal, De Tonancourt staggered to the wall, and gave a low, agonized cry for help. Before he could repeat the cry, Jodoin was by his side and had pressed his hand across his mouth.

At the moment the cry was uttered, I was conscious of a lady in the ballroom, sauntering past the reception-room door.

The cry reached her and she ran into the room—it was the lady of the photograph. For a moment she stood in mute astonishment and gazed at the scene before her, and then, with a muffled scream, ran up to M. de Tonancourt, and throwing her arms around him, said: "Father, what can this mean?"

It was the forger's daughter that Jodoin loved!

I was so startled by the discovery that I almost lost my hold upon the tree. The noise I made must have attracted Jodoin's attention, for, releasing the ghastly-looking man, he drew down the window.

What followed now was in dumb show, but per-

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fectly clear to understand. I saw her father point to Jodoin and to the papers in his hand, and say something, and then she staggered back from Jodoin, as though in horror, but the next moment she recovered herself and was at Jodoin's feet, her face buried in her hands and weeping as though her heart was breaking.

Her father's eyes were fixed on her in a dazed sort of way. As Jodoin looked down upon the beautiful head, his face began to work strangely, and great beads of perspiration started to his brow; he was fighting a desperate battle.

At last he laid his hand on her head, as if to soothe her. The touch of her beautiful hair must have gone straight to his heart, for the next moment he was kneeling by her side, and had imprisoned her hands in his. When they rose, she hid her face on his breast, and, as he clasped her passionately to his heart, the papers, so precious to us, and so damning to Henri de Tonancourt and Labarge, the teller, attracted his attention, and his face suddenly changed. He made a feeble movement as though to go over to her father and do his duty; but, with a woman's quick intuition, she divined that her father's liberty and honor were bound up in the papers, and for the first time raising her face to his she looked pleadingly into his eyes, and stretched out her hand towards them.

He drew back from her weakly. Then I saw her shyly draw his face down to hers and press her lips to his; then his fingers relaxed, and the papers were hers.

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As she raised them towards the gas above her head he turned his face away. For a brief space the window was illuminated and then there was a charred mass in her white hands. She then caressingly slipped her arm through his and drew him towards her father, who with flushed and hopeful face was standing near, and drew their hands together.

From the determined look which Jodoin's face now wore, I could see he was fully prepared to carry through the infamous part he was now so hopelessly committed to. After talking to them rapidly, as though giving instructions, he turned hastily and left the room.

I had been so fascinated by what I had seen that even after Jodoin had left I continued to sit and look in the window. I saw the banker and his daughter compose themselves and then, smilingly, arm-in-arm, enter the ballroom once more.

Then rage and bitterness surged over me, and, swinging myself madly to the ground, I signalled the two waiting officers to follow me. I had now lost all control of myself, and, running up the mansion steps, tugged violently at the bell. Instead of one of the servants, the banker himself answered it. He was pale, but perfectly cool: "Well, what do you want?" he said, angrily, eyeing me and the two men with marked disfavor.

"I have come to arrest you for forgery!" The words were scarcely out of my mouth before I realized how insanely rash they now were.

"Arrest me for forgery!" he repeated, in well-

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feigned astonishment; "what is the meaning of this farce? What are your proofs for such a scandalous accusation?"

I had nothing to say; instead of him being at my mercy, I now was entirely at his—thanks to his daughter and to Jodoin, who had destroyed all proofs. He pointed contemptuously to the door: "I will report this to the prefect to-morrow," he said, threateningly.

When I reached the street I had but one desire—to find the man whom I had once loved more than any other man, and towards whom my heart now burned with intense hatred.

I knew he had hurried away from her presence to complete his dastardly work by going to our rooms, where the teller was imprisoned, in order to tell him that his confession, the forged cheque and the letters existed now no longer, and that in consequence both he and the banker were free men.

As I sped wildly through the streets, leaving the two officers behind me, my mind went over that written confession. It had been so complete, tying together all the loose threads of the case and making success for us certain. It had commenced with the banker, and told the whole story. He had lost large sums of the bank's money in private speculation, and, at last, fearing his losses would be discovered, decided to play a desperate game in order to restore the money. He boldly sounded Teller Labarge—of whose character he had a pretty shrewd idea—and asked him to assist him in passing a cheque for two hundred

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thousand francs upon the bank. He explained that he was an expert penman, and had practised M. Tourville, the merchant's name, till he could make it perfectly. He had no doubt but that the signature would pass the ledger-keeper. In figure he was like the merchant, and he was sure that with the aid of a gray wig, moustache, imperial, and a suit like the merchant wore, he could easily deceive an ordinary acquaintance, should he happen to meet one when he was cashing the forged cheque. As he felt sure, however, that his voice would betray him to his teller, he had to come to him for his aid. For the risk he might run in giving the aid, Labarge was to be given a considerable sum, and to be introduced into good society.

The banker had not mistaken his man—the teller fell.

Prior to being a bank clerk, the teller's career had been a chequered one, and he had come into contact with Guyot, the informer, and knew of his hatred of the detectives and of his wish to leave Paris.

Before the cheque could be cashed it was found that a confederate would be necessary to watch at the door of the bank, and so the teller had gone to Guyot and asked him to do that job. He did not tell him, however, who the forger was. Liberal compensation and a passage to Mexico was offered, and the informer accepted. As is known, the scheme worked perfectly. The only danger which the banker encountered was when he was accosted in the bank by the two men who witnessed the cashing of the cheque, Pascal

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Villers and Telesphore Rivard, who really took the banker to be none other than the merchant, M. Tourville. These two men, consequently, were perfectly innocent of the crime. As they were friends of the banker, and as they never dreamt for one moment that he had anything to do with the forgery, they continued to visit at his house as usual. It was thus that we had been led to suspect that they were mixed up in the affair.

As soon as he had cashed the cheque the banker entered his private office by the side door on an adjoining street, slipped off his disguise, and was quietly sitting at his desk when the merchant entered to complain about the forgery.

It happened that on the day of the forgery the informer Guyot saw an item in an evening paper about the escape from the Conciergerie of Lisotte, the once famous forger, and it was his subtle brain that concocted the scheme of throwing suspicion upon him. He remembered that from Lisotte's general appearance, and with disguises, he could set the detectives off upon this wrong scent. He went at once to the teller and unfolded his whole plan, which was that he (Guyot) should leave that very night for London, where he would book his passage to New York by the first steamer. Instead, however, of travelling by it, he would return immediately to Paris. Before leaving London he would address to himself in Paris two letters, apparently penned by the escaped convict. These letters were, in fact, to be penned by the banker who had forged the cheque, and were to be got by

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the teller from him. One was to tell how he (the escaped convict) had committed the forgery the morning after he had been given shelter by Guyot, and where the disguises, which he wanted destroyed, could be found. The second letter was to be dated a day later, and was to show how he intended taking passage that day for New York *en route* for Mexico. To make success sure, the first letter was to contain the merchant's forged signature, just as it was forged by the banker on the cheque that drew the money.

The banker when seen by the teller about this shrewd scheme, heartily approved of it, wrote the two letters and again forged the merchant's name in one of them. The reader knows how successfully the letters misled Jodoin and myself. The banker also sent to the informer, Guyot, through the teller, the disguises he had worn when he had cashed the cheque. After we had followed in pursuit of the escaped convict and supposed forger, Guyot was to follow us to Mexico, where he would be safe and where he was to try and make us believe he had committed the crime—the sequel of the trip the reader knows. The thought of that Mexican trip was fuel to my mad thirst for revenge, and I hurried on quicker. As I ran up the stairs leading to our rooms, my hand unconsciously sought the pocket where I kept my revolver.

As I entered the room I found Jodoin sitting alone, while the door of the strong-room, where we often kept prisoners for a night, was standing open. The teller, as I had expected, had been liberated.

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"You despicable traitor!" As I uttered the words the blood rushed to his handsome face, but he made no reply. As I spoke I brought my hand down heavily upon the table, which gave forth a peculiar metallic sound. Glancing down I saw that my tense fingers had brought with them the revolver.

His silence only angered me the more, and bending over the table I went on madly: "I will let the prefect know the whole of this story, and, although you have destroyed all the written proofs, and they are free, he will believe me; for I will produce the man who helped us in the Café de la Paix, and the part he played will bear out my statements. When the story is known among the other officers they will despise you for a coward, and a traitor, and the owner of the beautiful face which led you to this infamy shall also be known, and—"

The grasp upon my throat was so sudden that I was taken entirely by surprise. In the struggle which ensued, the table was overturned, and very soon one of his knees was pressing heavily on my chest.

"Call me what you will, Painchaud," he said, huskily, "but for the love of heaven do not revile her; I am desperate enough now without that, and already have done you more injury than I can repair."

I had now lost all control of myself, and as his fingers relaxed I called out: "She is an infamous woman, or she would not—"

His cry was more like that of a wild beast than a human being, and his vice-like fingers closed again upon my throat. The suffocating sensation only lasted

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for a few seconds—a pistol shot rang through the room, and with a groan he rolled from my body to the floor. As I stood over him, with the smoking revolver in my hand, I could barely refrain from firing at him again.

Suddenly I remembered that it was not safe for me to be there, and I fled.

* * * * *

When he recovered, three months later, the scar on his face was so dreadful that he would be pitiful to look upon as long as life lasted. It was not known who shot him, as he said he did not recognize the man who stole into his room and fired.

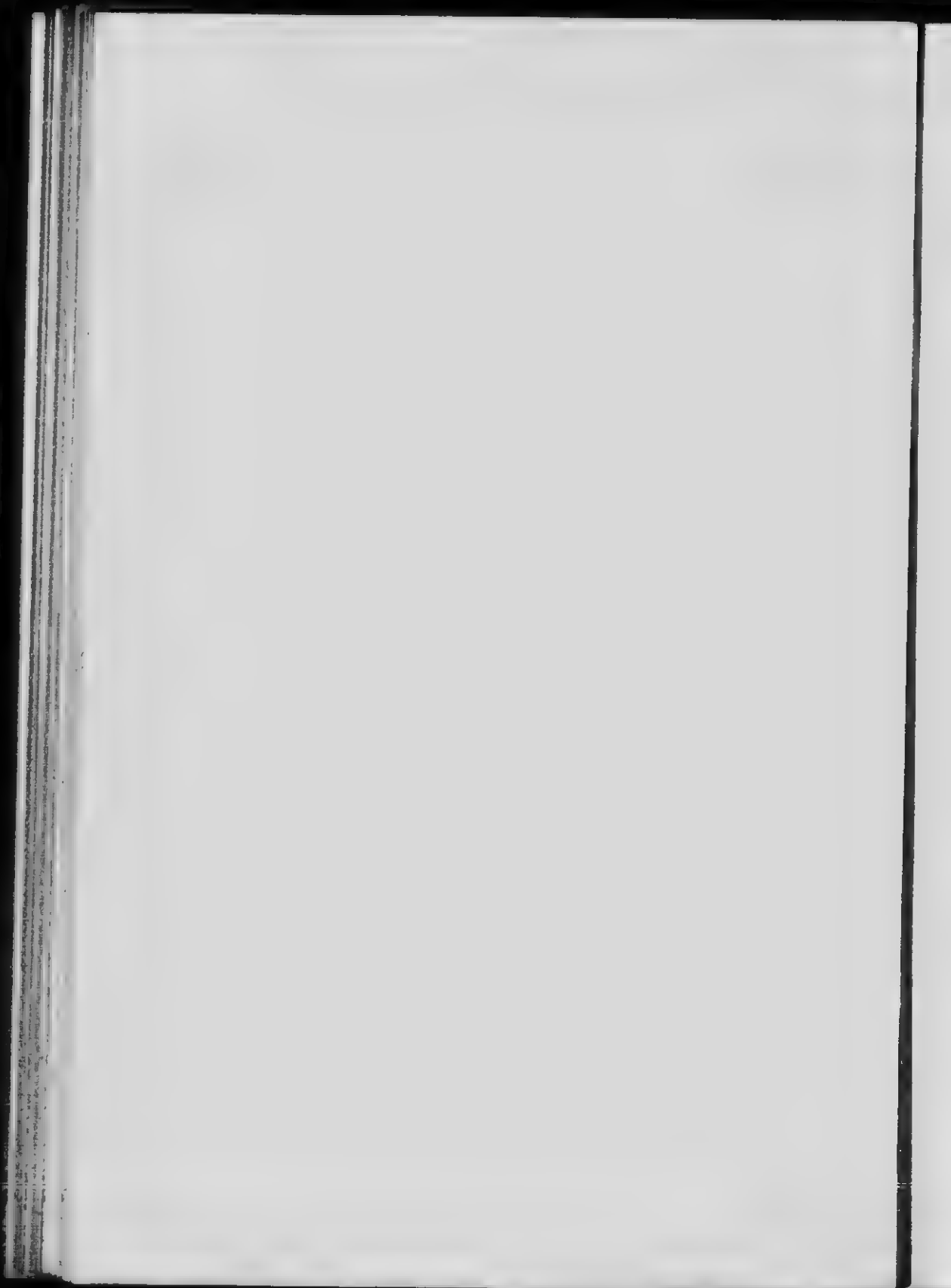
Had he had me arrested for attempted murder, I could have sworn out a warrant against him for compounding felony; but I knew it was not the fear of that which kept him silent, but the love of *her*. When she looked upon his face after he had recovered, she shuddered and drew away. Her repugnance completely broke down his already shattered health, and when she suddenly left Paris for a trip on the continent he took to his bed, never to leave it again. Her father, after she had gone, refused to recognize him—he was no longer in his power. The banker, too, kept his promise to me and reported what he termed “my outrageous conduct” to the prefect, and as I dared not explain, I was discharged in deep disgrace.

It was on May 10th, 1871, that Jodoin died. It was indeed a strange coincidence that death should have come to him on the anniversary of the forgery.

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Before he died he sent for me; but one year had not effaced the bitterness of my ruined character, and I refused to go.

But after a quarter of a century our thoughts are not the same. I have grown weary of the struggle with my conscience, and so, in the hope of finding peace, have written this confession, and the world now knows the truth about this strange case as well as the mystery of the shooting of Vital Jodoin, and may deal with me as it deems best.



THE FENCING-MASTER

The Fencing-Master

CHAPTER I.

"HALT!"

The clang of a dragging sabre suddenly ceased.

"Attention!"

The lone cavalry officer, constituting the entire army, stood suddenly rigid, suppressed merriment beaming in his eyes.

"Right about face!"

The scraping of the ponderous sabre was again heard as the order was dutifully obeyed.

"And now, sir, m-a-r-c-h!"

The final command, in the sweet girlish voice, was given with amusing gusto and command.

This time, however, instead of the order being obeyed, the gorgeously clad young officer stood as immovable as Ajax.

For a few moments the beauteous young commandant gazed in silent mock amazement at the army's disobedience to military orders, and then drawing up her petite, graceful figure to its utmost cubit she exclaimed, with sternness intended to be tremendously withering: "Captain Gordon Belmont, of His Majesty's Lancers, obey the command of your superior officer—m-a-r-c-h!"

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But the revolting army, with audacious temerity, still refused to budge; in fact it had the effrontery to smile audibly.

Rebellion such as this could be endured no longer, and so, stepping up to the revolting officer, the general of the disobedient forces, with extreme gravity and self-importance, unsheathed, with tremendous difficulty, the heavy cavalry sabre at his side. Then, in a tone intended to cut as sabre never did, she exclaimed: "Mutiny! Rank mutiny in His Majesty's army! Leniency, sir, would now be criminal. I deprive you of your sword. Once more, Captain Belmont—M-A-R-C-H!"

With a desperate effort the graceful commander struggled to raise the ponderous sabre (so as to give proper and terrifying emphasis to her command) as she endeavored to point, in a threatening way, down the broad corridor along which the revolting army was being bidden to march. The sabre, however, proved to be shamefully heavy; so that, after waving for a space, like a reed in the wind, its point suddenly came to the floor with a loud and humiliating ring.

And now the white teeth of the towering young officer were gleaming quite plainly through his smiling lips. To make the situation still more humiliating to the lovable commandant, the officer was looking down, with mock sorrow, at the heavy sabre, which the small hands still valiantly grasped; and he presently had the hypocrisy to innocently ask if the weapon was heavy.

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Upon this the commandant did a most unwarrior-like thing: she abruptly turned and tossed back her head, with its masses of gleaming hair, as though really too indignant for further words.

The bewitching picture she made was really too much for the rebellious army, and occasioned it to do a thing utterly without precedent even in the annals of mutiny. With a laugh of boyish merriment which echoed down the stately corridor, the officer looked in the most tender way at the offended commander and said: "There, Miss Dorothy, the mutinied army capitulates. You see it really was not mutiny after all. You remember when you gave the command to march you did not instruct the army where it must march to; it might have been to the dining-room, to the library, to the drawing-room, to the—the—"

At this point the commander-in-chief abruptly interrupted. Shaking her comely head in a sceptical way she said, with affected pathos: "I always understood it was a soldier's duty to obey without questioning. I am afraid that the force I command is not very loyal and—"

"Not very loyal, Miss Dorothy?" There was a strong under-current of earnestness now despite the banter. "Let me say that never was one of the illustrious Six Hundred more anxious to be loyal to a commander, Miss Dorothy, than I am to—"

He ceased, and his hand sought, and hesitatingly closed over, the little one still grasping the sabre. Strong and cool though his temperament was, his nerve was badly shaken now as he stood looking

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down at the dear little being before him with her sunny temperament and sweet, girlish bearing.

The sudden earnestness of his voice, with the suspicion she had of the momentous matter that had brought him to her father's house this day, caused her face to quickly change color. She was struggling determinedly now for composure.

His great hand still waveringly rested on the handle of the sabre, around which her own was clasped. Suddenly, with an adroit manœuvre, she let the sword, as though by accident, slip from her hand to the floor. Stepping back and looking down at it she said, in a pert, bantering way: "Well, was ever a general treated in so ignominious a manner; there lies the sword of command sent ruthlessly to the ground by the power that should have upheld it." Then, looking quickly up before he could reply, she went on: "As for your protestations of faithfulness to your commander, after the anarchy you have shown, I naturally am not impressed with them. In truth, if justice were done, Captain Belmont, you would be court-martialed."

"If court-martialed, I trust I can throw myself with *confidence* upon the mercy of the court?"

He bowed to the court with excruciating humility, picked up the prostrate sword, daintily held the handle out towards her and went on in a plaintive way: "Take the sword of justice, Miss Dorothy, but do not forget, O most righteous judge, that the highest attribute of justice is that which is tempered with mercy."

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A right merry laugh now broke from her lips, and, dropping her mock military dignity, she exclaimed: "Well, if all subordinate officers, Mr. Captain, persist in being as friendly as you to those h-i-g-h over them in authority, I have grave fears for the army's future prowess."

His happy laugh mingled with hers, and in his boyish way he was about to compliment her upon the glorious general she would have made, when she imperatively held up both her hands and said quickly and soberly: "Oh, you must really hurry, Captain Belmont. Papa was standing at the library window and saw you coming through the grounds. He told me he had an engagement with you at this hour, but having received an urgent military summons he had but a few minutes to spare. Consequently he dispatched me here, to the corridor, to ask you to hasten. But when I saw you the spirit of mischief seized me, as usual, and here I have been delaying you with my nonsense and assumption of military dignity. Do hurry now and go."

"But, Dorothy, I have not seen you for so long and I—"

But further prayers for delay were promptly drowned by a stamp of her small foot, and by the warning that her father might not wait.

With a sigh of right goodly dimensions Captain Belmont now sheathed his sword; and then they turned their steps in the direction of the library.

There was silence between them for a few moments, and then Captain Belmont hesitatingly

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and wistfully said: "I shall either be a very hopeful or a very unhappy man, Miss Dorothy, after the interview with your father, Major Westgate."

They were just at the library door as he ceased.

He looked at her, but her head was bent so that he could not see her face, and a feeling of depression came over him. He slowly laid a hand upon the library door, but before entering he again turned and looked anxiously down at her. She was standing as before, and he was just about to go when she bravely raised her face and her eyes looked into his. Then, without speaking, she walked quickly away.

There was a world of gladness in his look as he now turned the handle and entered the room.

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"Mon Dieu!"

Had the whispered words, so fraught with pain, been a little louder, they must surely have attracted Captain Belmont's attention before the library door was closed behind him.

In that part of the corridor near where Miss Dorothy had acted her little military comedy with Captain Belmont, a door, which had been closed at the time, now stood wide open, and framed in it was the anguished face of Monsieur Alcide Drolet, fencing-master and tutor to Miss Westgate. From his lips had fallen the bitter, pained exclamation. In his hand was a shapely, glistening foil, pressed so fiercely to the floor that the blade was bent like a

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scimitar. His eyes were fixed with passionate longing down the corridor in the direction of the drawing-room, which Miss Westgate had entered.

The moments slipped by, yet his figure relaxed none of its intensity. Had the corridor been more dimly lit it would have been easy to have thought him some mediæval figure in bronze, with his dark complexion, thin oval face, pointed beard, tragic countenance and bent weapon. Suffering and despair were outlined on every feature. Presently another exclamation fell from the statue-like figure; the foil, with a ring, suddenly straightened out, and with listless air and drooping shoulders the fencing-master entered the room behind him. In it were racks stacked with foils, clubs, and similar objects for athletic purposes. The room was long and almost bare of furniture. At the far end of it was a window which overlooked a large garden attached to the house.

Walking very slowly to the window the fencing-master looked out. But his eyes did not take in the beauty before him; he saw naught but the vision his mind was conjuring up; that of a beautiful girlish face, framed in a halo of shimmering hair, the winsomeness and great beauty of the countenance stirring his heart as such faces ever will stir the hearts of men despite all class and social distinctions.

And so the solitary tragic face gazed with unseeing eyes out of the window. He was recalling the forebodings with which he had looked forward to

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this day; forebodings which had daily increased, until now, when the climax had come and the truth stood clearly out before him, his impulsive southern nature was strung to a pitch dangerous enough for any tragic thing.

It had been all in vain he had tried to reason away a passion which he knew was nothing better than madness; with his despondent temperament he might as well have tried to reason with the warring forces of nature.

The days and months had gone their course, as they ever do, and now, at last, he had seen the return of the man he had heard so frequently spoken of—Captain Gordon Belmont. Through the slightly open door of the fencing-room he had witnessed Miss Westgate's humorous and winsome welcome of the officer; had seen the lovelight in the officer's eyes, and had seen what had stung more than aught else, the fleeting look Miss Dorothy had given Captain Belmont at the library door—in that look there had been encouragement, hope. In the divining mood now upon him he was as sure as though it had been written before him, what was the motive of the interview—of the request to her father that Captain Belmont had certainly gone to make.

And so he stood gazing blindly out, unheeding the flying minutes and the beauty of the scene spread out before him.

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The sound of voices coming through the window caused him to suddenly start. One voice would

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have quickened the beating of his heart in whatever circumstance of life he might have been. He glanced down into the garden and then drew hurriedly back into the shadow of the window; just about to seat themselves, directly below the window, were Captain Belmont and Miss Westgate. An eager look was on the officer's face. The countenance of Miss Westgate was concerned and slightly pale.

For a time after they were seated Captain Belmont tapped the gravelled walk nervously with his sheathed sabre, and then he began to speak in slow, earnest way, his words plainly reaching the ears of the fencing-master through the window, which was slightly raised. "I have just left your father, Miss Dorothy," Captain Belmont began, and then halted awkwardly. He had hoped it would be easy to speak of his love now he had got her father's consent; but in the presence of the one so dear, he realized that only the most minor part of the battle had been won.

As for the fascinating figure by his side there had come, despite all her daring and banter, a strange nervous feeling which she strove in vain to throw off.

Again Captain Belmont was speaking, and as before, his voice reached the open window. "We have known each other, Miss Dorothy," he was saying wistfully, "almost since we were children. During the year I have been abroad you—you have been much in my thoughts. A few days ago I wrote

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your father saying I would arrive to-day, and asking if I might see him on a matter very important to me. He replied, setting the hour for three o'clock to-day." The speaker hesitated for a space and then went on, more in the frank, boyish way characteristic of him: "Do you know, Miss Dorothy, that when I was coming to-day I was wondering whether you might not have changed from your old bright self; but when you met me in the corridor, in the rôle of a commanding officer, and put me through that wonderful drill, I knew my fears were all groundless; that, Miss Dorothy, you were exactly the same winsome little lady you always were." He paused, looked down at the lovable figure, and then went on with less ease: "I have just left Major Westgate, your father, Miss Dorothy, and the interview with him was a most momentous one to me."

Once more he paused, hoping for some little encouragement, but there was none forthcoming.

"A very momentous one," he repeated, lamely.

The figure by his side was silent as before.

Tactics were now thrown to the wind, and he broke out in his impulsive way: "I went to tell him, Miss Dorothy, that I loved you; went to ask his permission to tell you so. Ah, Dorothy, you must know how very dear you are to me. The happiness of my whole life depends upon how you will answer me."

He had risen and was standing before her now with outstretched hands.

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She made no answer as he concluded, but after a moment's pause rose, and in simple, unaffected manner, silently laid her hands in the great brown ones so eagerly held out.

His heart was too full for words. In like silent way he took the precious free-will offerings, and then stooping his great height down to hers touched his lips to her own.

As he did so something like a stifled exclamation reached them. Turning quickly, they both looked around in some surprise but no one was to be seen. But neither of them thought of looking up at the window of the fencing-room directly above them. Had they done so, however, the fencing-master had withdrawn so quickly they could scarcely have seen him. In his pain at what he had witnessed and heard, it had been impossible for him to more than partially stifle the cry that had risen to his lips. He was now standing a little back from the window, his anguished face hidden in his hands.

He could see them no longer, but their words still reached him.

"The noise must have been caused by some peering, envious spirit of the trees," came the laughing words of Captain Belmont.

There was a shadow on Dorothy's face as she replied, in a puzzled, serious way: "It seemed to me more like the sound of some human being in sore distress."

But the confident, reassuring laugh which met her words drove away the peculiar depression which

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had come to her, and presently they were sitting and talking, as lovers ever will, of all the happiness the coming years must surely be storing up for them.

In the silent room above them the fencing-master continued to mutely stand, his hands still covering his suffering face. The thought had come to him to rush from the house, but he remained, bitterness and anger gradually taking the place of the depression and pain.

Presently, as the two sat happily talking, he heard Miss Dorothy say, in a sudden, regretful way to her companion: "I fear that in my happiness I have been very inconsiderate of others. This is the afternoon I was to have taken my fencing lesson; and the hour for it is already long past."

"Your fencing lesson?" queried Captain Belmont grudgingly.

She smiled and replied: "Yes, my fencing lesson, Mr. Soldier. Shortly after you went abroad papa engaged a fencing-master to give me lessons; he contended fencing was not only an accomplishment but the best form of physical exercise one could get. So you see"—here she made an imaginary sword thrust at the tall figure by her side—"you will now be in danger all your life from an accomplished swordswoman. But, there, come with me to the fencing-room and I will dismiss my tutor till to-morrow; it has been very impolite to have kept him waiting so long."

With all a lover's selfishness Captain Belmont adroitly began to suggest divers excuses for a little

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more delay, seeing they were already so late; but the reproach in her face brought more generous feelings, and so, walking very closely together, they turned towards the house. By the time they reached it she had explained that her tutor had been treated with more than ordinary courtesy by her father, as it was understood he had come of a very good family; a family, however, that had met with such reverses of fortune that it had necessitated him taking up the profession of the sword. By birth her tutor was partially French and Italian.

She had just concluded as they entered the house.

And the fencing-master! As he had stood, and heard Captain Belmont suggesting still more delay before she kept her appointment, there had swept over him a bitter antagonism to the successful suitor; an antagonism that was forming itself into a well-defined and dangerous purpose by the time they reached the fencing-room.

"I trust Monsieur has not been seriously inconvenienced by my being late? I have been delayed because we have had visitors to-day."

Dorothy Westgate and Captain Belmont had entered the room, and as she spoke her clear, frank eyes looked sincerely into the shadowy ones of the fencing-master.

Quickly averting his eyes, he answered in excellent English: "I have not been inconvenienced; my time is at Mademoiselle's disposal."

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Captain Belmont was now introduced, and in his frank way shook hands. But scarcely had their hands met when the fencing-master abruptly turned. His action, though, was so timed that it was not rude; he had not intended it should be. The truth was he could not bear the officer to see the flush which had come to his face at the presence and words of Miss Westgate; whatever his secret and his sufferings, Captain Belmont, above all other men, must never know them.

But the profession of the fencing-master had taught self-control; so that, when he quickly turned, after putting a foil in one of the racks, he was cool and collected, and said quietly to Miss Westgate: "Perhaps Mademoiselle would like to postpone her lesson till to-morrow afternoon, seeing it is a little late?"

"If Monsieur has no objections I should prefer it," she answered courteously.

The fencing-master bowed. Then turning to the rack at his side he stacked other foils in it that were scattered round.

Chancing to turn, Miss Dorothy saw the fencing-master examining one of the foils. An idea suddenly came to her, and speaking to Captain Belmont she said with girlish impulsiveness, "Captain Belmont, you must come and see me take my lesson to-morrow afternoon. Perhaps you, too, might like to cross foils with Monsieur Drolet when my lesson is done?"

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Scarcely were the words uttered, and before Captain Belmont could reply, than a ring of metal was heard, and looking towards Monsieur Drolet, they saw he was stooping and picking up a foil that apparently must have slipped from his hand or from one of the racks.

No attention was paid to the incident, and, stepping towards the fencing-master, Captain Belmont said: "If Monsieur would permit I should like to brush up my fencing knowledge and also cross foils with him to-morrow."

"I shall be honored, Monsieur," came the courteous and subdued reply.

Turning from Captain Belmont to Miss Westgate the fencing-master then went on, in the same unruffled way: "Then, to-morrow at three I will come and give Mademoiselle her lesson?"

"To-morrow at three," she answered smilingly. "when you will have two pupils instead of one." In her happy, light-hearted way she then left the room, Captain Belmont by her side.

Once more the fencing-master was alone in the room. Seating himself moodily, his eyes sought the floor. Presently his lips moved and he repeated, in a sinister way: "Two pupils instead of one!"

The shadows which were slowly creeping into the room accentuated the depression that had again mastered him. It did not come to him to account for the sudden cheerlessness of the room because of approaching night; he was simply conscious that *she*

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had gone, and with her everything that was bright, everything that was worth living for.

With dangerous self-pity he began to recall his misfortunes, arraigning the world for what he termed its mercilessness to him; yet, in truth, much that had befallen him in the way of misfortune had been but the natural reaping of what a sombre disposition had sown.

Finally, his thoughts were dwelling on the past year of his life, a year in which a love that could never be requited had come to him. Ah, how the passion had mastered him. She had been so entirely different from him with her brightness and high spirits that soon the happiest hours of his life had been the brief ones he was teaching her the art of which he was so thorough a master. What true content and peace there had been for him in this one year. How little he had craved after all; simply that the days might still continue to be as they were; that he might yet be allowed to worship afar off. Now everything was to be changed. She would soon be a wife. Only a few brief minutes ago he had seen the hands that he scarce dare touch, lying in loving content in another's grasp; had seen the tender light in her face as she had looked up into the one bending over her; had seen the head of the officer droop till their lips—

But the bitterness of memory was too great, and springing to his feet the fencing-master strode like some caged thing up and down the room. Gradually the evil mood upon him deepened. Why,

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he asked himself, should Captain Belmont, who had wealth, position, in fact everything to make life happy, come into his life and take its one ray of sunshine away? For him, unlike other men, was there never to be happiness?

Suddenly he stopped, and, with a strange light in his eyes, again repeated the words his pupil had so innocently uttered: "Two pupils instead of one!"

Yes, for him, as for other men, there should certainly be compensation! With this resolve now firmly in his mind, he walked with slow deliberation to one of the racks. Connected with the foils was now a plan which fascinated him. Taking down one of the weapons he tested it with much care, and then putting it into a case left the house with it.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANTIQUE CASKET.

It was hours after midnight, yet the thought of sleep had not occurred to the fencing-master. He was sitting alone in a humble little room situated in a much different part of the city than the stately residence of Major Westgate. A fire burning fitfully in a grate lit up the room in shadowy way. The sharply cut features of the fencing-master were, at intervals, clearly revealed.

The gloom and hardness of his face had sensibly increased during the long hours which had intervened since he waited, in such bitterness, to give the lesson that had been postponed till the morrow.

Through the long hours of the night he had sat and brooded over the thing that was in his mind. At times his purpose had wavered. The quiet of the night oppressed him. Finally, with a desperation peculiar to his temperament, he had told himself that with the advent of dawn what course he would pursue should then be irrevocably taken.

As he had done a dozen times before, he now hastily rose, went to the window and drew back the curtains; his face, this time, lit up—there, away in the east, was the first promise of morn. A feeling of exultation throbbed in his veins. His course was chosen.

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Turning from the window, he strode to the table in the centre of the room and took up the foil he had secretly taken from the house of Major Westgate the afternoon previous. Then going to a trunk he drew from it a small and quaintly shaped casket. In size it was not much larger than a walnut. Seating himself he touched a spring and the lid of the casket flew noiselessly back. The lamp over his head and the flickering firelight cast Rembrandt shadows behind him, accentuating the tenseness which had come over his face as his eyes rested on the contents of the casket; and yet all the casket revealed was a rich, creamy-looking substance which no more than half filled its tiny hollow.

Shutting the casket he laid it with the foil on the table, after which he walked to the door to see that it was securely fastened. Now he would sleep. After rest his mind would be clearer. What was now to be done needed the full daylight and care.

How he sought for sleep, and yet how it evaded him; the haunting casket, the foil, Dorothy Westgate and Captain Belmont, how they fascinated and jeered at sleep. Yet he was not nervous. The tension was such, and so finely strung had become his nerves that they seemed to be of steel.

In this highly wrought mood the hours stole by. Of danger to himself, from what he contemplated, he had no fear—that which was in the casket left no traces behind. One haunting thought alone caused him compunction—the misery that must surely come from his act to the one so unutterably dear to

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himself. Hers, after all, was to be the hardest part to bear; the lifetime's hunger for one she had loved, but whom death had taken. Yes, it would be the living that would have the real cross to take up. Then it flashed across him that if it chanced oblivion should come to *her*, instead of Captain Belmont, it would be Captain Belmont who would have to take up the burden of a heart that would ache till the grave covered it. This was the very burden that he, himself, must carry. How equal would be the punishment!

With the advent of this new thought Dorothy Westgate was assigned a tragic rôle in his heated reasonings. Yet her beauty and brightness! How it strove with him. But that he would not suffer alone was unalterably fixed in his mind. He rose from the bed. The choice between her and Captain Belmont should be taken when they stood before him in the fencing-room!

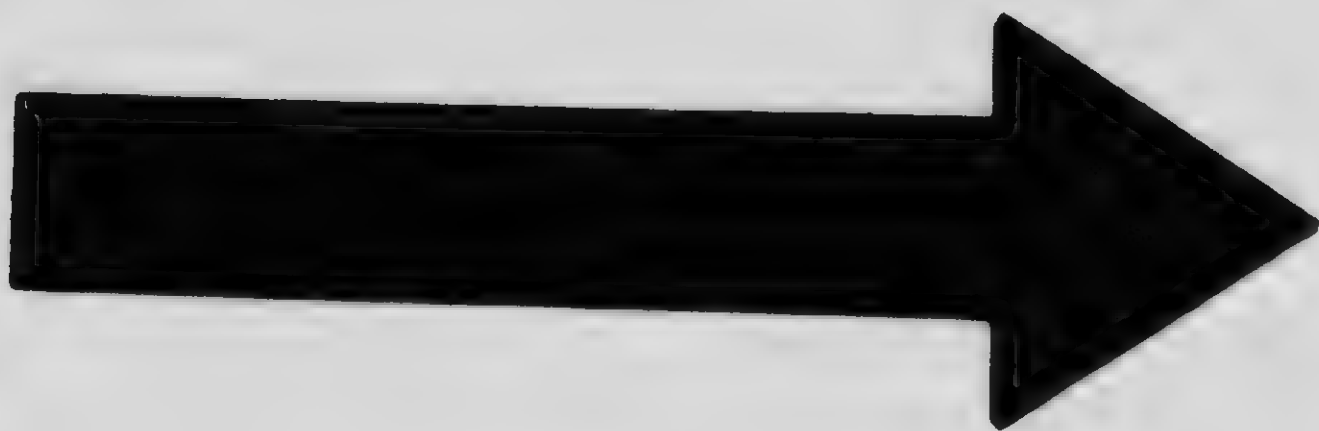
His manner was calm and collected as he again walked to the window and drew back the blinds. It was high noon; the room was flooded with light.

In methodical way he sat down by the table and again took the foil from its case. He carefully examined the button at its point, and after some difficulty removed it. The point of the foil, as he had expected, was quite blunt. For close upon an hour he filed the point till it was as keen as a needle. Satisfied with his task, he then turned his attention to the button he had removed, deftly hollowing it till there was a small aperture completely through

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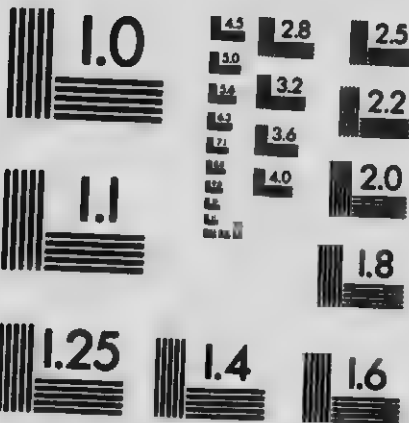
it. Fitting the button on the foil again, he slowly worked the weapon till its point protruded somewhat over a quarter of an inch. In the same purposeful way he then reached for the curiously shaped casket and once more touched the spring; again there was disclosed the rich, creamy-looking paste. Slipping the button from the now protruding foil, he smeared the foil's keen point with the paste. This he did with extreme care. Once more he turned his attention to the button, filling its interior with a thin coating of cement. After ascertaining the paste was dry on the foil he inserted its point in the button so that it did not protrude. In a few minutes the cement hardened sufficiently to fasten the button to the point, and at the same time it filled up the aperture which had been drilled through it. The cement being the color of the button, the foil to all appearances looked as innocent as might any other foil in a rack. The fencing-master well knew, however, that an ordinary sharp blow would make the point protrude through the treacherous button, and that a scratch from it would mean death as inevitably as would the bite of a cobra.

The paste, a subtle poison, he had secured while travelling in the Indies many years before. The peculiar appearance of the casket had, at the time, been the principal reason for getting possession of it. The morbid curiosity of the man had also been aroused over the statement that the poison it contained was such that it would leave no trace behind.



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And now, after satisfying himself as to the way the button was held to the foil, he took up the casket again, drew the embers of the fire together, and then placed it upon them. He watched it till it was consumed, a peculiar odor emanating from it, and then he scattered the ashes so that not a trace of the casket was left.

Scarcely had this been done when a clock over his head sounded the hour of two. He rose hastily; in another hour the time for the lesson would be at hand. In a few minutes he was on his way to the home of Major Westgate, the encased foil in his hand.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOIL AND ITS MARK.

It yet wanted a few minutes to three when Dorothy Westgate and Captain Belmont entered the fencing-room. Prompt as they were they found the fencing-master waiting them. He bowed quietly as they entered, but did not speak. In the frank, winsome way so characteristic of her, and which had endeared her so deeply to her hapless tutor, she held out her hand to him in greeting, saying with friendly courtesy: "Monsieur sees I have not forgotten my lesson to-day; I believe, indeed, I am a little before the appointed hour."

"Mademoiselle is very kind." As he murmured the words, and as his eyes sought the floor, she turned with girlish pleasure to the rack near where they were standing and laid her hand on one of the foils.

But ere she could take it down the fencing-master was at her side. "I think," he said a little quickly, as he lightly touched her outstretched hand, "that this foil is a little imperfect; if Mademoiselle will pardon me I will get the one she generally uses."

She nodded in a careless way, and then turned to speak to Captain Belmont, who, after having greeted the fencing-master, had seated himself.

Upon facing her tutor again she saw he was standing waiting for her, a foil in each hand. Handing

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her one of the weapons, he said, briefly: "This, I believe, is Mademoiselle's favorite foil."

She took it, and stepping back, put herself into position. It would have perplexed her had she known that the foil in his hand was the very one she had been in the act of taking down; a foil he had put in the rack before their entry, and which he had said was imperfect.

"Mademoiselle is ready?"

"Ready, Monsieur," she answered eagerly.

"Mademoiselle will attack."

Their foils slithered together.

With hands deep in his pockets Captain Belmont in his good-tempered way sat looking idly on.

Presently, with considerable deftness, she tried to reach her tutor with what is one of the most subtle movements of attack—that from the wrist with its deceptive and treacherous thrusts. Failing in this attack she tried to outwit his defence by thrusts he had taught her in extension, lunging, and so forth, but with an ease that almost seemed without effort, he turned her every attack from his person.

Each time he circumvented her he endeavored to impress the "parades" (the defensive tactics of the art) the more firmly upon her memory by calling out the technical names of his parries; and so, at short intervals, his murmuring voice reached her: "Defended in 'Quatre'; defended in 'Tierce'; in 'Circle'; in 'Octave'; in 'Prime'; in 'Quinte'"—and so on.

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Presently she paused, and then, altering her mode of attack, tried the numerous feints she had learned; but these, too, were equally of no avail against the master of the science before her.

"Mademoiselle will now please guard against attack."

There was no change in the evenness of his tone. Stepping back, he raised his foil—it was the same upon which he had spent so much time in his room!

As she assumed the defensive her clear blue eyes, full of roguish merriment, were fastened on those of her tutor, and she said jestingly: "Monsieur may expect just the same success in breaking through my parades as my thrusts and feints were successful in breaking through the defences of Monsieur. I am sure," she continued laughingly, "I shall not need, when Monsieur is done, the services of a surgeon."

Had Captain Belmont not spoken to her at this moment she must have inevitably noted the sudden paling of the fencing-master's face. Upon hearing her banter about a surgeon's aid being unnecessary, he had experienced a peculiar and unnerving thrill. She stood before him now a living, beauteous being, at the very dawn of womanhood, yet, ere another day had sped its course, where might all this beauty and winsomeness be? Again, as the thought flashed through his mind, came the unnerving thrill. Yet, despite it all, he tried to harden his soul, and stifle dawning pity, by picturing her happy in the love of another, while he lived out his life in ceaseless longing.

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"I am ready, Monsieur."

She had turned from Captain Belmont again.

He started slightly at her voice, but recovered himself immediately.

The ring of their foils was again heard, and once more her soft eyes were fixed watchfully upon his. Their utter absence of apprehension strove with him as no prayers could have done.

His swiftly moving foil was now twisting in a snake-like way about hers, and there was not an instant that he could not have touched her with it; yet he delayed doing so, shrinking before the deed he had made up his mind to perform, more and more as the minutes slipped by.

The exercise had brought a flush to her cheeks, greatly heightening her beauty; her eyes were glowing with excitement and perfect health, while her graceful, swaying figure made her very sweet to look upon. At times, when she parried with what she thought more than ordinary trueness, a pleased ripple of laughter reached him, still more increasing the pity that would not be kept out of his heart. At last, such was his sympathy and pity that an actual terror possessed him lest, by any mischance, the point of his foil might reach her, and put the seal of death on a thing so beautiful.

While in this new and merciful mood towards her, he chanced to step suddenly to one side and his eyes met those of Captain Belmont, and in an instant his determination took a new course. After a few more passes, he stepped back and lowered his point.

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"Mademoiselle," he said, bowing slightly and speaking softly, "has done very well."

As she stepped past him to put back the foil, she answered, again in a jesting way: "Did I not tell Monsieur he would find it impossible to thwart my defence to-day?"

"Yes; *to-day* it was impossible, Mademoiselle." He put ever so slight an accent upon the word *to-day*; but before it might be given attention he had turned to Captain Belmont and said: "I am at Monsieur's service. I believe Monsieur said he would like a few moments' recreation with the foils this afternoon."

"I shall be delighted, delighted!" The words were uttered in a bluff, soldier-like way, and Captain Belmont walked, with alacrity, to one of the racks, and, after testing a couple of foils, chose one and then expressed himself as ready.

Just as their foils scraped together, Miss Westgate seated herself in a position which chanced to be about midway between the two men; so peculiar was her position that every time they thrust their foils they had to pass beyond the line where she sat.

Her eyes were constantly fixed on the handsome soldierly figure, and the lovelight deepened in her eyes as she noted his really clever thrusting and parrying.

One thought alone now dominated the fencing-master's mind—before his foil stood the man to whom life had given so much, yet who would take out of his own life the only object that made it

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sweet. Before they had been fencing many moments he knew that at any time he pleased he could give forth the fiat of death from the dread point of his foil, and that in twenty-four hours the obstacle to his peace would be swept mysteriously but surely away.

As these desperate thoughts were surging through his mind, Captain Belmont's foil had twice come within the merest shade of touching him and thus scoring a point. The fact was that in his distraught mood he had been guarding himself by sheer force of habit.

Having looked for a far more clever opponent, Captain Belmont was now putting forth every tactic to get within his adversary's defence. Up to this time the fencing-master had almost entirely adopted the defensive; but without a moment's warning he suddenly assumed the aggressive. The instant he did so, Captain Belmont, skilled in the use of foils and swords though he was, realized that he was now standing before a master of the sword such as he could never hope to be.

"Ah!"

The low exclamation had fallen from the lips of Captain Belmont. It had been called forth by the extreme beauty and alertness of a "time" thrust which the fencing-master had made, and which had escaped touching his breast by the sheerest accident. Depending for their success, as such thrusts always do, upon the exact instant an adversary is planning an attack himself, Captain Belmont had not been

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able to withhold an exclamation of admiration at the subtle manner in which the fencing-master had read his thoughts, and at the extreme cunning of the thrust he had made.

Even while he was yet marvelling over the skill of his adversary the fencing-master, with another subtle time thrust, got once more between his guard, and this was followed again with three or four other lunges of equal brilliancy. Each thrust could easily have touched him and scored, and he was mystified that this was not done. He now felt himself to be a mere plaything in the hands of his opponent.

The truth was the fencing-master, at each thrust, had intended to press the treacherous point of his foil to the flashing uniform but at each lunge his foil, as before, had had to pass in line with the sweet, eager figure facing them, and somehow he kept putting off the tragic moment. While he procrastinated he again began to recall the fact that the real cross would fall on the shoulders of the one who lived, and not on the one to whom death brought oblivion.

Ah, if his pity had not been aroused when she had stood before him, and he had not spared!—a swift, poignant regret came over him.

But suddenly, in a manner that was peculiar to his temperament, a deep sadness, at the weariness of it all, took possession of him. He was fencing mechanically again. Presently a deep, wistful look came into his face—a decision had now come to him from which he knew there would be no faltering.

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"I compliment Captain Belmont; he fences exceedingly well." The fencing-master stepped back as he spoke. The peculiar, wistful look still mantled his face.

With boyish frankness Captain Belmont held out his hand. "I should not," he answered in a generous, admiring way, "like to face Monsieur if it were necessary for him to hold a dangerous weapon."

"Captain Belmont thinks too highly of my skill," was the simple rejoinder.

"Papa says," broke in Miss Westgate, with frank admiration, "that Monsieur Drolet is one of the best swordsmen in Europe." Continuing in the same generous way, she added: "I fear that so perfect a swordsman must often have been wearied in trying to teach me."

"Weary of teaching *Mademoiselle*!" There was a depth in his voice they could not help but notice, but it never came to them to even dream of its real cause.

She was about to speak again when he said abruptly, and in an utterly changed tone: "I forgot to tell *Mademoiselle* yesterday that circumstances call me abroad at once. I regret to say I shall not be able to continue *Mademoiselle's* lessons."

"Ah, I am sorry, Monsieur."

He bowed sadly and went on in the same abrupt and peculiar way: "I shall have to leave to-night. Before going I should like to show *Mademoiselle*, if she is not too weary, a movement with the foils

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which, as a swordswoman, I think she will appreciate."

"With pleasure, Monsieur," she replied in her considerate way.

He turned without further words to the rack, and when he faced her again two foils were in his hands. Once more he handed one to her. As she put herself into position, and as he was about to raise his foil, he said huskily: "The movement is a double feint in *flanconnade* action—thought out by myself. As will be seen by *Mademoiselle*, much of its danger lies in its simplicity."

Although he spoke quietly there was something in his tone that attracted Captain Belmont's attention and perplexed him.

"Ready, *Mademoiselle*?"

"Ready, Monsieur."

Their foils met softly. For a moment both stood alert. Then, with the quickness of thought, the fencing-master made a sudden and most peculiar feint. As she stepped back parrying, it was succeeded by another feint equally new to her. She parried again, but even as she did so she saw, to her astonishment, his foil, like a vivid gleam of light, cut a confusing semi-circle, and then—then she felt the point firmly strike her shoulder.

"Wonderful, Monsieur Drolet; I never saw anything more beautiful in my life!" The words of admiration were uttered by Captain Belmont.

Paying no attention to the speaker the fencing-master looked in a strained way at his pupil and

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then said: "That, Mademoiselle, is the movement. I have never known it not to be successful. Allow me to explain it." He was speaking in a feverish way, and again Captain Belmont looked at him curiously.

Standing some little distance from his pupil the fencing-master very slowly, and alone, went through the double feint, the confusing semi-circle and the thrust, explaining each minutely. Then he stood on guard again, telling her that he now would act on the defensive while she executed it and tried to score.

And his instructions were followed to the letter. Scarcely had their foils touched than, with a flush of excitement, she perfectly executed the double feints, following with the semi-circle, and then thrust sharply—her foil with firm impact struck his breast.

"Mademoiselle could not have executed the movement better." As he spoke he stepped forward and courteously relieved her of her foil.

She was pleased at his compliment and said warmly: "It was very kind of Monsieur to teach me it, especially as it is my final lesson."

"Yes, Mademoiselle, the *final* lesson." He spoke enigmatically, turning away with the foils as he did so.

As Captain Belmont now stepped to her side, he thought she was looking paler than usual, and he said, with quick solicitude: "I fear the lesson has been a little long; you are looking tired. Shall we now withdraw?"

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She consented, but before going held out her hand to the fencing-master and said, in a gentle, womanly way: "Again, Monsieur Drolet, I regret to lose so skilled a teacher."

As their hands met for the briefest space, and as his eyes, with an unfathomable expression in them, flashed into hers, he now, for the first time, really comprehended the woeful thing that had happened between them; and such was his emotion that he could not trust himself to many words, and he replied briefly: "Mademoiselle speaks very generously."

She turned somewhat slowly from the room with Captain Belmont, and as she did so the fencing-master looked fixedly after her. His hands still held the two foils they had just used.

As the door was closing behind her a gleam of sunlight shot through the window and fell upon her shining hair, beautifying it so that it shone like shimmering gold. A moment more the door had closed. The lives of tutor and pupil were separated for all time.

The fencing-master was alone in the room once more! Slowly his eyes travelled from the door to the foils he was still grasping. His face was strangely pallid. Raising the weapons, he looked at their points. On one of the foils the button was perfect, but on the other a needle-like point protruded. In a perturbed way he now put the perfect foil back into the rack. The other he enclosed in its case

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again and, after hastily looking at his watch, hurriedly left the house with it.

Reaching the street he hailed a carriage and drove rapidly to where he lived. Once in his room again he made a complete change of clothing, after which he destroyed all his correspondence. Although every action was apparently methodical, his eyes were glittering with intense excitement. Finally he took up the foil and with a quick blow broke off the point. It was still slightly besmeared with the creamy-like paste, and also slightly discolored. Thoroughly cleaning the point, he carefully wrapped it in a piece of paper and put it in his pocket—that which had done so much woe should never leave him. Before very many hours it would have worked that which no physician's art could undo.

With a last look around the room he left it. Driving direct to the station, he took a train for London, that teeming metropolis where it is easier for one to be lost than in the wastes.

Eight hours later the roar of London's streets was in his ears, and midnight was just striking when a carriage halted with him at the door of a small hotel in the suburbs.

Entering the hotel, he signed his name in the register as Henri Dumochel, Paris. The clerk stared at the man curiously; the color of his face was ghastly. When being shown to his room he staggered and swayed so the porter could scarcely suppress his laughter—he was sure the late guest must have been making a glorious night of it. But could he have

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been in the room when the fencing-master, with fumbling fingers, lit the gas, and as the light clearly lit up his face, he would have cried out with alarm; for the clammy sweat of death was upon it, while in the eyes was the sure imprint of the great Reaper.

Turning to the bed the fencing-master, by sheer force of will, succeeded in removing his upper garments; but he was too desperately ill to disrobe further.

Sinking on the bed, in a half sitting posture, he succeeded, after much difficulty, in opening wide his shirt. As his hands fell to his side again his dulled eyes wandered over his breast as though seeking for something. Presently, that which he sought met his gaze—a scratch, directly over the heart, not much larger than a needle would have made.

A faint and pathetic smile came to his lips. To think that, after all, it should have been her hand that had given him his death; a hand that willingly would not have given death to the simplest living thing. But even now he had no regrets; of all ways this had surely been the best. For him, now, there would be no years of hopeless longing to pass.

Reason was rapidly failing him. His breathing was quick and uncertain. At last memory failed completely and soon, in delirium, he was living over again the tragic events of the past few hours. Once more he thought she stood before him, foil in hand, the foil he had covertly handed to her when, wearied out with the struggle within him, he had finally decided that he would harm neither of them. It

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was the *poisoned* foil, in the last lesson, that he had given her.

As before, he was now in his delirium explaining to her the two subtle feints, the confusing semi-circle, and the quick, dangerous thrust. As before, too, she was stepping back into position, the deadly foil in her hand, to give him his death wound. How beautiful, even to his dying senses, she was as they now, for the final time, crossed foils. Again he was watching her make the double feint, the semi-circle, and then—then he saw her thrust. How easily he could have parried it! But he had allowed the point of her foil to strike him. The button had only too well done what he knew it would do; it had allowed the point of the foil to come through, and he had been scratched over the heart that ached so wearily.

As though the slight sting of the point had again been felt, a faint moan broke from the dying man's lips. But suddenly the agonized face took on a look of wondering happiness. The scene before his wondering mind had changed again and he was living over another event of the past—but ah, living it over so differently from how it had ended. The scene was that when Captain Belmont had returned from abroad, when Miss Westgate had met him in the corridor, and when, with girlish roguery, she had assumed the *rôle* of a military commander.

As clearly and as distinctly to his imagination as on that day he now heard the sweet voice ring out the command once more—

“Halt!”

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The clang of the dragging sabre ceased.

"Attention!"

The slight scraping of the sabre was again heard by the dying ears as the officer obeyed the beauteous commander.

"And now, sir, m-a-r-c-h!"

Exactly as before he saw the officer stand immovable; saw the winsome figure laboriously drag the heavy sabre from the scabbard at the officer's side, and then, just as she was about to give the word of command again, the officer, for the first time, turned, and then—oh, God, the happiness of it!—the face was not that of Captain Belmont, but his, his, Alcide Drolet, the fencing-master, her tutor! Into his eyes, and not into those of the officer, hers were looking with a world of tenderness. Oh! how good God had been after all! To think that it was himself, and himself alone, she loved! There had never been any Captain Belmont. That had been a delusion. He had not put a poisoned foil into her hand that she might give him his death wound. What a nightmare it had been! How rapturous the awakening to the truth.

"Dorothy—Sweetheart!"

The endearing words were whispered by the dying lips so faintly as to scarcely break the silence of the room. They were the last words they ever framed. The aching, despondent heart was at rest at last. There had come to him, in the gracious hallucination of death, a triumph which reality could never have brought. And so the face that had been so

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despondent and sombre, now in death wore a repose and peace it had been such a stranger to in life.

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There was no inquest; none was deemed necessary. He had been found dead in bed without marks of violence. None knew him, nor could anything be found upon his person to lead to his identity. The only curious thing found upon him was a little bit of steel, about an inch long and keen at the point. But it excited no suspicion—its appearance was too harmless!

CHECKMATED

Checkmated

CAPTAIN OF POLICE WILLIAMSON had just leaned wearily back in his office chair after a trying day owing to a strike there had been in the town, when a powerfully-built, florid man entered and briskly enquired:

"You are Captain Williamson, I believe, sir?"

"That is my name. What can I do for you?"

"Before I tell you that I had better let you know my name. I am Jim Saunders—Big Jim they call me down at the works."

The captain nodded and waited.

"I have come to swear out a complaint against a party." The words were uttered complacently and without venom.

Captain Williamson shot a keen glance at the jovial, good-tempered face before him and said, good-humoredly:

"I should not judge, Mr. Saunders, that it is a murder charge you want to make."

"Well, no, Captain, it has not come to murder as yet; but if things don't mend in a certain quarter you may have the unpleasant duty of arresting me on such a charge."

"Tell me your story, Mr. Saunders," was the brief response.

"With pleasure, Captain. You see it is this way. The complaint I have to make is against a neighbor

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of mine, a Mr. Napoleon Lariviere—a Frenchman, I believe. Three weeks ago he and his wife took the cottage next door to us, since which time neither Mrs. Saunders or myself has known what a decent night's rest is. Now if this condition of affairs continues there is going to be shedding of blood."

"Your neighbors are quarrelsome, I suppose?" commented the captain, noting at the same time the lack of ferocity in the deadly threat.

"Oh, no; the trouble is something more refined than quarrelling. It is music; and Lord, Captain, such music, and such reams of it! It is music at noon when the Frenchman comes home to dinner, music after tea till midnight, and then, to cap it all, music in the morning from five o'clock till breakfast at eight. That man, Captain, is a public nuisance, a disturber of the peace, a menace to a law-abiding community, and I want a warrant for his arrest on a charge of committing a public nuisance."

"But, my dear man, you cannot arrest an artist for practising in his own home."

"I would not want him arrested if he were entitled in any way to the name of artist. He is not one. He is learning the violin—and only commencing to learn, at that. There are certainly laws against disturbers of the peace, and I want you to pull that chap badly, Captain."

After a moment's amused silence Captain Williamson damped big Jim Saunders' hopes by the statement that there was no by-law whatever to cover such a case.

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"But, look here, surely there must be," protested the complainant with renewed energy. "I tell you, sir, if you had to listen to the wails of that unhappy fiddle at five in the morning, as I have shown my wife and I have to do, you would ferret out a law somewhere to fit the case. Believe me, Captain Williamson, it is astounding what ungodly and unrighteous noises he can get out of such a small machine. The real torture lies in the high notes, and he is a wonder in making them horrible. The beggar must be thinking of Dante's 'Inferno' when he soars up the strings. Such screams, moans and tortured cries you cannot imagine. When he starts his early morning gymnastics, Hetty, my wife, says she feels her back hair just rising, and jumps up and runs down stairs. I also get the creeps, but I stand it a little better, as my nerves are stronger, but I tell you the experience we are going through is enough to make a man long for the position of hangman."

"I can realize, Mr. Saunders," said Captain Williamson, sympathetically, "that you must have to put up with a great deal of annoyance, and I would really like to help you. But, my dear man, if there is no law in this town covering your case, what can I do?"

"Well, it is good and plenty time there was a law, then. The doings of the Inquisition must have been a dream of delight in comparison with what that man is inflicting."

"Have you been to remonstrate with him?"

"I didn't go myself, but my wife did."

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"And?"

"No good came of it. She didn't see the fiddler chap himself, but his wife. It appears the poor woman is as sick of her husband's musical stunts as we are, but she has no control over him. What do you think? He actually told her the time will come when the whole world will flock to hear him play. I have no need to say, Captain, that he won't find Hetty and I in the crowd."

Captain Williamson laughed, and rising, again expressed his regrets at not being able to give assistance.

"That settles it, then," said Jim Saunders also rising. Just as he was about to pass out of the door he turned and said, quizzically:

"I guess there won't be any bloodshed, Captain; but I am going to do an almighty lot of thinking to see what can be done without the law's aid."

Some ten minutes later Jim Saunders walked into a compact little two-story house and was met by Mrs. Saunders, a pretty bit of a woman about one-half the size of her husband. She at once anxiously enquired what the police captain had said.

"He said, wife of my bosom," answered her husband after kissing her, "that when the wise men of this town made the laws they forgot to make it a criminal offence, or any offence at all, for a wretch like the man next door to ruin the rest of a pretty woman like you, and a fine man like your husband, by diabolical music."

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"Then, James, what am I to do?" she was almost in tears. "You know how lightly I sleep, and the loss of rest is wearing me down. You will really have to go and see the man. Ask him to stop the morning practice, anyway."

"Very well, then, I will go, Hetty, but I hate like sin to do it. I have a temper, you know, am about twice his size, and in any accidental mix-up it would mean 'a fairer land on high' for him."

An hour later James Saunders was ringing the bell of the next door house. The wails of a violin could be plainly heard inside. A subdued-looking woman answered the summons, and in reply to a question stated her husband was in. She ushered the visitor into a little bedroom at the back of the house where sat the artist, a thin little man, spectacled, scant of hair, and operating upon a violin. The sounds he was drawing from it caused Jim Saunders much inward disquietude.

"I thought I would drop in and see you for a moment," began Mr. Saunders pleasantly, as he extended his immense hand. "Excuse the call being a bit informal, but I am your next-door neighbor, Jim Saunders."

The man of music advanced, violin in hand, and said, in broken English: "Monsieur is kind. I have much pleasure in de visit." While the words were friendly there was a touch of irritability in his tone. He pointed, not very graciously, to a chair which Saunders cheerfully took.

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"To do away with any preliminary canter, Mr. Lariviere, it is about your playing I have called."

"Ah, indeed," said the artist in a more friendly tone. "Perhaps Monsieur is also an artist. We shall be brothers. I trust Monsieur likes de selections I play?"

Jim Saunders simply sat and looked. "Brother musicians," he murmured under his breath. "Lord!"

He recovered from his astonishment quickly enough, however, upon hearing the artist ask him if he would like to listen to a piece he was practising.

"Thanks, thanks, Mr. Lariviere; not now," promptly responded Mr. Saunders. He paused for a moment to gather himself together and then went on quietly: "While Mrs. Saunders and myself, Mr. Lariviere, are not averse to music, we have not been trained to listen to it at five in the morning. It may be our fault for not having the artistic temperament."

"Surely, Monsieur," replied the artist, the friendliness having gone out of his voice, "you would not ask me to cease to practise? All artists must do that."

"Oh, no, friend, I do not ask you to cease practising; but you know you have the day and evening in which you can do it. Where the rub comes in, neighbor, is your early dawn work. It wakes my wife up and lands me out of bed, too. That's the situation, you see."

"I am full of regrets for Monsieur," was the angry response, "but it cannot be. It is when day is coming I have de artistic temperament de most."

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A feeling of wrath surged over James Saunders, but realizing the cards were in the hands of his opponent he began on what he judged a more diplomatic move. "I suppose there is your side, Mr. Lariviere, as well as mine," he began, "to this matter; but seeing we are neighbors it should be possible for us, with a little give and take, to settle the difficulty." He smiled as he concluded, but it was far from being a festive one.

"Monsieur means?" was the sharp rejoinder.

"I mean, friend," rolled out Jim Saunders, insinuatingly, "to suggest that, as you cannot see your way clear to stop your playing at daybreak, that you might deem it advisable, for the sake of friendship, to leave out the high bars in the pieces. In the practice after tea, you know, you could tackle what you had left out in the morning. It would simply be a matter of remembering. The notes that had to wait should sound just as good to you at any other part of the day. I am sure, old chap, that you are going to be a sport and meet me in this thing."

What happened now completely ruptured further diplomatic relations. Springing to his feet, a torrent of angry words in broken English, sandwiched with French, fell from the lips of the musician. On no conditions would he accept the invitation to be a sport and comply with such an unjust proposal. He demanded wrathfully to know from Mr. James Saunders what he himself would think should the proposition be made to him that he must eat only half of his breakfast in the morning and consume the

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other part at night. High notes, Jim Saunders was informed, had to be played with low ones. Being an artist truly devoted to his art, he would consent to no such ruthless butchery. He finally intimated that he would consider it a favor if he were permitted to go on with his music. A glance at the door completed the delicate hint.

As the tirade ceased the hands of Jim Saunders fairly itched. He thought how easy it would be for him to seize the mite of a fellow, double him neatly together, and put him inside the open violin case. As he slowly rose to his great height his eyes flashed dangerously. "You are a miserable, unobliging little runt," he began in a voice like the sound of many waters, "and if you dared to make a public nuisance of yourself on the street, as you do in the house, with your abominable playing, I would grab you myself and land you good and safe in a cell. You happen to have the law on your side, but if I don't yet make you glad to stop these morning uproars my name ain't Jim Saunders."

Entering his own house, and slamming the door so pleasantly that the pots vibrated in the home of the gentleman he had left, Mr. Saunders vigorously explained things to Mrs. Saunders.

"That fellow," he thundered, "hasn't as much heart as his seventy-five cent fiddle. He won't drop the morning serenades; so, Mrs. Hetty Saunders, I have made up my mind to camp on that chap's trail."

For hours that night, while the wife of his bosom was sleeping, Jim Saunders lay with wide-open eyes

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in the dark. He did everything, except to implore the aid of Divine Providence, to help him concoct some scheme for the confusion of the musical genius in the next house. After tossing till he was almost wearied out, an inspiration came that filled his whole being with joy and satisfaction. Then he slept peacefully. When he awoke it was to hear the tearful voice of Mrs. Saunders. He did not have to ask what the trouble was—the artistic soul of his neighbor was again revelling in piercing discords.

To Mrs. Saunders' surprise her husband, instead of saying various pungent things as was his wont, grinned delightedly. "Don't you mind, Hetty," he said cheerily, "this inhumanity to man will not last much longer. You have heard what the Good Book says, dear, of judgments hanging over people's heads. Well, there's one that's hanging by the weakest thread you ever saw, over the head of the man who is making these zephyr-like noises. Come on, dear, amble out. To-night I want you to sleep in the parlor and I will bunk here alone." More than this he would not say, and as further sleep was out of the question they got up and dressed.

As Mr. Saunders was leaving after breakfast he said cheerfully: "I may be home a little late to-night, Hetty, after work, but don't worry. Got a little business to transact."

Much to Mrs. Saunders' concern it was considerably after nine before her husband returned. He came jauntily in carrying a peculiar-looking case over

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four feet in length. A muffled metallic sound came from the box as he deposited it heartily on the table.

"Whatever in the world is that, Jim?" asked Mrs. Saunders curiously.

"This thing here, Mrs. Saunders," replied her husband, opening the box and drawing from it a long, snaky-looking musical instrument, "is something that has been mentioned in Holy Writ many times, though its name may have changed a bit while coming down through the ages. You have read, Hetty, how certain instruments of brass blew down the solid walls of Jericho, such was the enormous uproar they could raise. Well, this, Mrs. Saunders, is one of the same breed of noise-makers. It is now known as a trombone. I am afraid, dear, the man I got it from was not very religious. It was his belief, Hetty, that when the last trump sounded, at the end of time, it would be one of these historical instruments which would be selected to waken up all the people who have been waiting the call for such untold ages."

"James! James!" said Mrs. Saunders, reprov-
ingly.

Holding out the instrument for his wife's better inspection, Saunders went on: "Now, just you look at this special piston arrangement." As he spoke he suddenly extended his arm and the machine, having been so fashioned by nature, shot out its sinuous length past his wife's head and far beyond the length of the table.

"Gracious, it looks alive, James! What is the thing for?"

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"Don't be in such a hurry, Mrs. Saunders. I have only started to tell you about its mysteries. Wait till you hear it warble." As he spoke he slightly inflated his lungs and blew moderately into the wonder. The result was a blast of such uproarious nature that Mrs. Saunders uttered a suppressed scream and started from her chair.

"Jim! Jim! What a horrible instrument!" she ejaculated.

Mr. Saunders beamed delightedly. "It's got some voice, hasn't it, Hetty?" he grinned; "but, dear, that's only a whisper to what it can do."

"But you have not told me yet what it is for?"

"Never mind about that now, Hetty. You go off to sleep in the parlor to-night, and if you hear the house shaking in the early morning don't go and get scared and think an earthquake is in town." Mr. Saunders then went to his room, the Biblical instrument resting on his shoulder. With an easy conscience he went promptly to sleep, the trombone, ready for action, stretched out on the bed by his side.

It was shortly before five when he awoke; in fact, just in time to hear the beginning of the concert in the next house. "He is some determined musician, all right," muttered Mr. Saunders, as he briskly bundled out of bed, "and he can make some pretty creepy music; but if this trombone keeps to its reputation, and if my lungs take a proper pride in what they are going to be called upon to perform, that fiddle music will sound like liquid melody in comparison."

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For a space he methodically jointed and then dis-jointed the curious limbs of the machine, listening all the time with a smile to the suffering exertions of the violin. Presently he said aloud, with a benign expression of countenance: "And now, you wonder of a fiddle player, the hour has come when the wrongs of a suffering and unright man must be righted." With a huge inward breath, which mottled his face red, he forced a blast from the instrument so abysmally deep and appalling that the musician in the adjoining house sat transfixed with astonishment at the uproar, the fiddle slipping from his hands to his knees.

James Saunders lowered the trombone and listened; but no longer was the plaintive voice of the violin heard in the land. Its owner, still dazed and wondering, strove desperately to understand what could be the cause of it all.

Mr. Saunders continued to await developments, and had almost decided that one broadside had done the business, when a faint and apologetic scraping of the strings was again heard. It was evident the violinist had pulled himself together again, and was very gingerly trying to ascertain just how loud his symphonies would be tolerated by the newly-fledged musician.

But the mood of James Saunders was such that he was not to be mollified by any violin music, no matter how humble and subservient it might be. He was out for unconditional surrender, and he meant to have it though the very heavens should fall.

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He now gave himself to his master effort. Blowing as though his very salvation depended upon it, and manipulating the piston-arm arrangement with remarkable rapidity, there broke upon the air a whirlwind of truly diabolical sounds. As the lower notes were the most gruesome they received special and lengthy attention. Glorifying in the tempest he was creating, and spurred on by the memory of his wrongs, Jim Saunders kept at and at his task till he was finally forced to cease through sheer exhaustion. "Now," he murmured with a gasp, "there should not be much left of either the fiddle or the fiddler. A dispensation like that ought to result in the white flag all right."

Even while he was uttering these rejoicings there came, early though it was, a timid ringing at the door-bell.

With the air of a Roman conqueror Jim Saunders, trombone under his arm, strode to the door and opened it—the artist of the violin stood crestfallen before him!

"I come very early to call; I make apologies," began the knight of the bow, deprecatingly. In his great haste he had brought the bow with him, and he made an apologetic curve with it as he spoke.

"Oh, glad to see you, neighbor," was the hearty response. "Come in."

The violinist humbly intimated that he had not come to make any extended call, but just to have a word or two.

"Very well, old man; anything I can do for you?"

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Very falteringly the artist informed his brother musician, after a sorrowful glance at the trombone, that getting up so very early to play the violin was not agreeing with his health, seeing he had to work in the day; and so he thought he would just drop in and say there would be no more violin music of a morning.

Jim Saunders, in his big, hearty voice, declared that a man's health was the very best thing he had, and ought to be taken care of at all hazards. The practising so early of a morning must have been a great drain upon his neighbor's vitality. He made the incidental remark that while both he and Mrs. Saunders would miss the cessation of the morning concerts they would hold no grudge because of that.

Seeing the visitor still hesitated Mr. Saunders then gave the information which he knew was sorely longed for. It related to the trombone. "Although Mrs. Saunders would like me to continue my studies with this new instrument," he said shamelessly, holding up the fearsome thing for his neighbor's inspection, "I have come to the conclusion that I will continue its practice no longer. It might be annoying to the feelings of others, you know, Mr. Lariviere, and neighbors should always consider each other's feelings."

Very heartily Mr. Lariviere agreed with these sentiments, after which there was an amicable shaking of hands and expressions of good-will. Then Jim Saunders went to the little parlor where Mrs. Saunders had slept—or had desperately striven to

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do so. He contended ever afterwards, much to the mortification of Mrs. Saunders, that it took him exactly ten minutes to unwrap the blankets from about her head, and he actually added that when he finally brought her to the light of day once more a goodly portion of the pillow was stuffed in her mouth—all of which strange devices she had adopted out of respect to his trombone playing.

NOT ALONE BY APPEARANCE

Not Alone by Appearance

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY AT FARMER TRUDEAU'S.

JEAN BEAUCHEMIN, with wistful air, drew the red toque with its dangling tassel well over his ears and then, possibly for the first time in his life, took a really long survey of himself in the mirror. The countenance, strong, and not unattractive to look upon, got scant if any attention at all; the whole critical scrutiny was bestowed upon the clothing. As he continued to look, his expression changed from wistfulness to dissatisfaction and almost pain.

With deep forebodings he presently turned from the mirror. Haunting his mind was the different appearance Telesphore Trudeau, and other young habitants who worked in the United States and who returned to Canada to spend the Christmas holidays, would present at the dance at Farmer Trudeau's tonight. All the mirror had reflected was a figure clad in nondescript Canadian homespun, a red toque, and feet covered with moccasins.

"Mademoiselle Franchere," he muttered, "is sure to notice the difference in Telesphore's dress from mine."

The secret of his discontent with the goodly homespun suit was now out. This was the fly in the oint-

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ment; this the waters of Marah to him. If he could but have thought that Telesphore in his finer clothes might be no more attractive in her sight he would not have cared a whit had he been coming from the States arrayed like Solomon himself.

The little clock near the mirror struck the hour of eight, and the thinker started. Farmer Trudeau's was three miles distant, and it was time he was off. Once more he pulled the toque well down over his ears, and leaving his cozy little farm-house, took the road leading to the quaint village of St. Flavie, where Farmer Trudeau lived.

To think, too, that the gathering this Christmas night should be at the home of the father of the young man whom he so dreaded as a rival!

He was suddenly roused from his unhappy musings by a moan of wind. Looking quickly up at the sky he murmured, "It is going to be a fierce night." Across the face of the moon, dense clouds laden with snow were hurrying wildly. Soon the wind was blowing in such furious gusts and driving the snow in such blinding clouds that it was difficult to follow the road. He plodded steadily on, however, his thoughts but slightly disturbed by the weather. Fascinating attention was a face he had conjured up, vivacious, pert, and framed in such a profusion of glossy brown hair as to be in very truth a crown of glory.

"Hello, Jean Beauchemin, I nearly ran you down in the storm."

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Jean sprang to one side, and looking up saw the face of Telesphore Trudeau peering at him through the darkness.

"The horse was nearly on you, Jean; but jump in. I suppose you are going to the dance at father's. I have just arrived from Fall River and am going there myself."

"Thanks, Telesphore." As Jean spoke he got into the sleigh, and the next moment the horse had dashed forward again. Before they had gone many yards Jean became aware that Telesphore was driving in a strange and reckless way. He tried to catch the expression of the driver's face, but the snow was too blinding.

In a very few minutes their destination was reached, and springing to the ground Telesphore threw open the door of his father's home. A right goodly and inviting scene was revealed. As in nearly all French-Canadian farmhouses, the front door opened directly into the dining-room. In the centre of the room was a huge box wood-stove aglow with light and warmth. A score or more of guests formed a circle round it. In a corner was seen the fiddler of the village, Pierre Fiset, doubled up over his instrument and swaying in true French-Canadian way from side to side as he drew dulcet strains from the strings.

There was an immediate outburst of welcome, and eager hands were seen helping Telesphore, the visitor from the States, off with his coat. Jean, not being a wanderer from home, went quietly to a cor-

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ner and hung up his own coat. Do what he would, he could not help a tinge of jealousy, but what greatly comforted him was the fact that the face with the crowning of beauteous hair chanced to be absent from the room as they had entered. He had found out, however, that she had arrived just before them and was now upstairs.

"It's better here than out in the storm, Jean."

Turning, Jean saw Telesphore before him. His greatcoat had been removed, and it was now seen he was clad in the very latest fashion.

"Yes, it is far better here than out to-night," replied Jean, taking in with a sweeping glance the fashionable outfit. Looking more closely at his companion, Jean saw his face was very pale and that his eyes were glowing with suppressed excitement. In his manner, too, there was something very akin to dread.

As the two men stood talking side by side, the difference in their appearance was very striking. Telesphore was small of stature and slimly built. His face, very prepossessing, was almost girlish in mould. A light moustache, gracefully curled, added to the attractiveness of his features.

Jean, on the other hand, was six feet two, rugged and sinewy-built, indeed, almost like a Viking of old. He towered over Telesphore by nearly head and shoulders.

Presently a low exclamation broke from Telesphore's lips. There had just entered the room a

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white-haired, lovable old body, and by her side Mademoiselle Alice Franchere. At the merest glance it was seen that Miss Alice was by far the prettiest girl in the room.

Telephore hurried to meet them. Jean saw the elder woman passionately embrace her returned son, holding him now and again at arm's length and looking up into his handsome face with visible pride. And then Telephore turned to Mademoiselle Franchere, with an air of politeness that Jean sorely envied. The two were soon engaged in a most animated conversation, Madame Trudeau having hurried away to welcome other guests. Jean, in his retiring way, felt suddenly lonely.

The scraping of the fiddle, which had been silent for some minutes, now filled the room, and old Fiset, the fiddler, who, besides constituting the entire orchestra, was master of ceremonies as well, called out in a voice loud enough to wake the dead, "Time now for de firs' waltz. Take your pardner." As some of the guests were English, and did not understand French, he followed the recognized custom of the habitants of speaking in quaint broken English. In a twinkling tables and chairs were unceremoniously dragged into corners, and the young men were hurrying about to secure partners.

If it so chanced Jean had eyes only for one fair face in the room, there were many bright eyes that were turned towards him; but he contented himself by watching the dancers as they flitted past. The scene was a pretty one. The men held unswerv-

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ingly to plain homespun, but the women wore almost every conceivable shade, and thus there was no dearth of color; nor was there dearth of hearty enjoyment. The majority of the young men had come from the shanties where they had been wood-cutting, and the way they entered into the spirit of the dance—after the long quiet of the woods—was good to see. The young men who had returned for the holidays from cities in the United States took on amusing airs of dignity.

A dozen times Telesphore, with Miss Alice on his arm, had passed where Jean was sitting, but her eyes had not once met his.

The dance was almost at an end when Jean felt a hand on his shoulder. Looking up he saw Telesphore's father. His face seemed strangely careworn.

"Come into the kitchen and smoke, Jean."

Rising, Jean followed. Two rooms, very small, led from the dining-room. One was the kitchen; the other the parlor. A small cook-stove glowed in the kitchen, and near it the two men seated themselves.

For a long time the old man smoked in a silent, troubled way, gazing at the fire. Jean sat smoking at his side, patiently waiting. In his strong, earnest way, Jean had been a favorite of the elder man's since boyhood.

"I am troubled about Telesphore, Jean!" The words came abruptly. Without waiting for a reply he went on: "Telesphore and you were boys together—it might be he would confide in you."

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"I thought Telesphore looked well to-night," Jean said, hesitatingly, wishing to give comfort.

"To-night his looks only increase my fears, Jean."

There was another silence and the speaker went on hastily: "Something is wrong. During the past few months Telesphore has written to me four times for money. Of course I sent it; he is my only son, and some day everything will be his. In great cities temptations are often hard to bear" (here the voice was sadly broken), "and so, Jean, I am troubled with strange fears concerning him. You and he were boys together, and he might confide in you if—if he should be in trouble and is keeping it from me."

As he ceased, the wheezy tones of the violin stole again into the little room; a new dance was being started. Through the partially open door Jean could see Telesphore go again to Miss Alice and speak to her. He thought she hesitated for a moment, but she rose, and presently Telesphore's arm was around her, and once more they were dancing.

Turning away from the sight, Jean said, steadily, "Before the party breaks up I will try and see Telesphore, and something may happen that I can ask him for his confidence. I think I shall have news that your fears need never have been harbored."

"You have grown from the boy into the man I knew you would, Jean—sincere and noble."

For a moment the two men, one with life's course almost run, the other strong in young manhood's estate, stood silently clasping each other's hands; then turning from the little kitchen they entered the happiness and laughter of the big room.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD CHEST OF DRAWERS.

At midnight the guests were seated at an improvised table that stretched almost across the long room.

During the meal which followed, Jean was very thoughtful, partly on account of the mission before him, and partly because of the fact that in the earlier part of the evening, when he had asked Alice Franchere to dance with him, she had answered curtly that her next dance was already promised. She was now seated opposite him at the table, Telesphore at her side.

If the guests had danced with a will, they enjoyed the meal with equal gusto. Although the storm had increased in fury, its shrieks could scarcely be heard, such was the good-cheer within.

At length the time for the speechmaking came, and then the oldest man in the room, as was the custom, was honored with the first toast. On this occasion it was quaint, humorous Pierre Fiset, the fiddler, a patriarch indeed, with his fourscore years—years happily that had in no wise crushed out his joy of living. When the stamping of feet, clapping of hands and waving of glasses at the announcement of his name had ceased, the veteran of the bow rose with some difficulty and straightening his shoulders began quizzically, as he looked around the table:

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"It is good t'ing for see how much de gals enjoy demselves when de boys come from de shanties; and to see, too, how de shanty-men have de glorious time when dey come home for de Christmas. It is a gran' t'ing for sure w'en we be young. I often wish, my frien', dat I be young shanty-man again so dat I too —" But at this point the orator's voice was drowned by the roar of approval from the shanty-men. Presently the patriarch continued:

"W'at I was goin' for say was dat if I be only twenty-five again dare's not many young fellow here have much chance wit' de gals——"

Again he was interrupted with applause, and when silence was restored once more he went on, with a touch of seriousness:

"But one word now for all dose young men dat go on de States for live. If dey want for live long like me dey better come back to de farms again, an' stay in de bes' country de world' never see—an' dat is Canada."

Here the applause was tremendous from the shanty-men, but very subdued from "dose dat go on de States."

"An' now de las' word I want to say is dis. Myself I am glad for be at anudder Christmas gaddering, for give you pleasurement by play de ole fiddle. I'm play her now for near forty year; so I guess I have not many more Christmas lef'. But, my goodness" (here a fine light came to his face), "de worl' will owe me notting. An' now, you young folk, take

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advice of ole man an' get all de smile you can out of life—dat is way I have always try to do."

The old patriot sat down amid expressions of approval that made his face fairly glow.

During the speech Mademoiselle Franchere had several times cast covert glances at Jean's earnest features, and more than once an expression had stolen into her face that would have astonished him had he been aware of it.

And now Telesphore's father rose to say a few words. From his bright and cheery manner no one would have thought that care was sorely tugging at his heart. He also spoke in broken English, so that all might understand.

"De more ole I get," he began, in kindly way, "de better I like de custom we have in dis country for our sons come back and spend de glad Christmas at de homesteads. De mos' of you are from de shanties; but some of our sons are from de States, too. Dis is de right way. It is good for see you young men, wedder you work in de shanty or on de States, come, like young birds, back to de ole nests an' de parents who rear dem."

Pausing for a few moments the speaker looked with peculiar earnestness down at his son Telesphore and then continued:

"At my right han' here I have my only son Telesphore. He has come from being on de States where he try hard for make position in life. Dis, of course, is not easy t'ing to do; for many t'ings try dose who live in great cities. But like all udder fadders who

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have sons go on de States, I can trust my son for bring honor to his mudder an' to his ole fadder, too.

"As for all my guests here I want to say in de conclusion I wish you de mos' happy Christmas you never have."

As his father sat down, Telesphore flashed a look at him in which there was palpable fear and desperation.

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In a surprisingly short time the table was taken down and the floor cleared. Everyone helped. No better incentive was needed than the sight of old Pierre sitting in the corner and twanging the strings again in a way quite irresistible.

"You have not danced much to-night, Jean."

The soft voice sent a thrill through him. Turning he saw Miss Franchere at his side.

"No, I have not danced a great deal," he said, with a shade of sadness.

"Why?"

"Because I—" he halted lamely.

She looked up and waited.

"Because," he said at last, "you have seemed so engaged to-night."

There was neither reproach nor affectation in his tone. The color mounted suddenly to her cheeks, but his eyes were not on her face.

A noise of feet now attracted their attention and, looking, they saw that a new set was being formed. He had not danced with her yet, and something told

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him she would not say no to him this time. But as he was in the act of asking her to dance, he chanced to see Telesphore go alone into the kitchen and close the door very quickly and quietly behind him. The promise he had made instantly came back to him. Such an opportunity to see Telesphore alone would not likely occur again before the party broke up. It was a hard sacrifice to make, but he did not shirk it. Looking down at the sweet figure at his side he said slowly:

"If you will kindly excuse me, there is someone I must speak to."

Even as he was speaking they were asked to make up a set that needed a couple. He refused. With an angry light in her eyes, Miss Franchere turned and walked abruptly away.

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Going slowly to the kitchen, Jean entered it. To his astonishment it was empty. Suddenly remembering the door leading into the little parlor, he crossed the kitchen to it. From under the door a light gleamed. Turning the handle he stepped into the parlor. In a corner of the room was Telesphore, who, as the noise of the opening door had fallen upon his ears, had sprung to his feet from the side of an ancient chest of drawers, at which he had been kneeling. From the chest he had taken a large roll of bank bills—his hand still grasped them. In the silence of the room the two men stood looking at each other. On Telesphore's face was an expression of agony.

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"Put it back, for the love of the Virgin put it back, Telesphore! Think of your father, it would kill him. No one shall ever know. If you need money I will help you."

With ashen face, and without uttering a word, Telesphore opened the old chest again and put the money back into a secret recess. Then he locked the chest as it had been before. As he stood with drooping head he felt Jean's arm slip through his own. Silently they passed into the kitchen.

As they left the parlor Jean noticed that he had thoughtlessly forgotten to close the door when he had entered, but he gave the matter no serious thought. It was well he did not notice that a figure had reached the kitchen door at the very moment he had entered the parlor. The kitchen being in direct line with the parlor, the figure had distinctly seen Telesphore with the money in his hand, and had heard Jean's cry for him to put it back.

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Telesphore and Jean were now sitting in silence in the kitchen. Presently Jean stretched out his great hand and laying it on Telesphore's effeminate one, said softly, "Your need must have been very great, Telesphore, and the temptation sorely hard. Is it too hard to tell me all about it, Telesphore—that which made you give way?"

Burying his distressed face in his hands, Telesphore did not reply for a long time. At last he began in an abrupt, desperate way.

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"Jean, I—I have not been living right. Four hundred dollars to one who has not got it is a very large sum. In a week's time will come the New Year. The books of the office will then be balanced. If this sum is not returned before that time I shall be found out and—and arrested. The terrible disgrace then to the name of which my father is so proud!"

He paused for a moment to regain composure and then went on: "I dared not write again to father for money; he had been sending it to me frequently of late, and I was afraid he might possibly come to see my employers. In my desperation, I remembered how he never kept his money in the banks, but hid it in the old chest of drawers. From the moment this came into my mind I had no rest. When I left to come home I tried to assure myself I would not attempt to get the money, yet deep down in my heart I felt I should yield to the tempter. The keenness of the temptation was in my reasoning that there would be so many present to-night it would be impossible to attach suspicion to anyone. Shortly after I arrived to-night I managed to get the key to the old chest of drawers where I knew father kept it. In my great haste to get the money I forgot to lock the parlor door behind me. You pushed it open and—and saw my shame."

With haggard face the speaker rose and concluded brokenly, "There is nothing now to be done but return to my employers, confess the truth, and suffer

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the consequence of my wrongdoing. I shall take the first train to-morrow and——”

“And put the money back before it is too late, Telesphore, and all is known! I will lend it to you; we were schoolboys together. In time you can pay me back, so you see it is not a very great favor after all.”

The graciousness of the words as they fell from Jean's lips, and the sudden relief from the strain and fear, left Telesphore without power to utter a word. Turning suddenly away, he tried to hide the tears that blinded his eyes.

There was a long silence: Jean did not attempt to break it; he knew that balm was coming to the tried heart and better and nobler resolves were being formed.

“Jean, I know not how to thank you, I——”

But Jean's hand suddenly covered his mouth and smothered the words.

“All I ask, Telesphore, is that in the future you will keep unsullied the name which your father so greatly prizes.”

“That name now shall never be tarnished by me, Jean; I will henceforth be a son in whom he can have just pride.”

“Thank God, Telesphore!”

“My father, Jean, he—he—will never know?”

“Of what has happened this night he shall never know, Telesphore.”

The hands of the two men met in a long, fervent clasp.

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As they entered the dining-room together the basso profundo tones of old Fiset fell upon their ears: "Take de han' all roun' an' do de gran' chain!"

While Jean was smiling at the quaint broken English, Telesphore's father stepped swiftly to his side and said anxiously, "Telesphore has just left you, Jean, and I saw you both come from the kitchen. Have you spoken to him? Is all well? Or is he in trouble of any kind?"

"Everything is well," was the calm reply. "See, there he is passing. Look at his face. Is not peace and content there?"

With parted lips the old man shot a glance at his son as though he would read his very heart; and then Jean heard him murmur, "The dear Virgin be praised! It was a mistake then; there was nothing to fear."

"He told me to tell you that in all things he would strive to be the son you would have him be."

"How good God is to me this night, Jean." The tremor in the speaker's voice, and the sudden erectness of his shoulders as he now strode down the room, repaid Jean a thousand-fold for any sacrifice he might have made.

All this time sitting quietly in a corner of the room was one who had watched Jean and Telesphore come together from the little kitchen. The relief on Telesphore's face had been noted; as had also the sudden pride with which Telesphore's father had just left Jean's side. The very pair of eyes that had seen these things had been a witness, too, of the dramatic scene

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which had been revealed when Jean pushed open the parlor door in search of Telesphore.

As Jean was now coming down the room, and looking enquiringly from side to side, the one who had seen so much that was thought to be hidden only in two breasts, rose quickly, and quietly mingled with the dancers.

Whatever Jean's search, it came to an abrupt end the moment his eyes fell upon Miss Franchere, who was dancing with a well-to-do young farmer. It had been Jean's hope that he might find her alone and in some way be able to make amends for his apparent discourtesy to her. But as she glided past him, and as their eyes met, there came a little tilt to her chin which had an ominous interpretation for him.

At last came the time to depart, and there was a scurrying for wraps, and a loitering about the door by divers young men who had concocted plans for escorting home certain young ladies. Although Jean felt it would be useless for him to cherish hopes, he could not leave before Alice Franchere appeared and he gave himself the additional pain of seeing who her escort would be. He had taken up a position near the great stove which he knew she would have to pass.

As the minutes flew by his heart began to beat like a schoolgirl's. He well knew that more than one of the patient watchers at the door was thinking of the same bright vivacious face which so enthralled him. When she came, he steeled himself for the curt parting nod which he felt would be his portion.

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As she reached the stove he raised his eyes and looked at her in a manner an onlooker might have thought was quite calm; but she was not deceived—well she knew there was sorrow at his heart, despite his manner. What she did fairly took his breath away. Stopping suddenly she said as she warmed her little hands at the stove for a moment: "How cozy it is." Then she hesitated, but presently she continued bravely: "But by walking fast I am sure *we* shall not mind the cold."

She dared not raise her eyes to his now, but walked abruptly on.

They were side by side when they reached the door, Jean bearing himself like some victorious general. They had bidden good-bye to the hosts, but just as they were stepping out into the night, Jean felt a hand softly touch his arm. He turned. It was Telesphore. Again the hands of the two men met in silence. The pressure of Telesphore's was more eloquent than any words.

As Jean reached the road, an impulse made him turn and glance back at the door, which still stood open. A tableau met his eyes that was never forgotten. Telesphore was standing talking to his father and mother, and they were looking up and listening with an air of pride that no son would have bartered for a kingdom.

If Jean's heart beat with satisfaction before, it fairly danced with it now; he knew their great pride would never be confounded by the knowledge of how very near it had come to being wrecked.

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"The storm has passed, Jean."

It was Miss Franchere's voice and he started from his reverie.

Looking up at the sky, he saw the moon just emerging from behind a cloud. "The storm has indeed passed," he said in slow, earnest way. He was thinking of what had so recently happened at the home they had left, and as he replied there was a shade of meaning in his tone he was unconscious of.

She looked quickly up. As their eyes met there was something in her face which caused him a vague uneasiness.

For a little distance they walked in silence, and then she said suddenly, in a low voice, "The storm that was in your mind, Jean, when you spoke, and which you are so glad has passed, was the storm you prevented from breaking over Telesphore's home."

He stopped as though transfixed, looking at her in a dumbfounded way. She knew he was waiting for her to continue, and in voice vibrating with deep feeling she went on: "It was very noble of you, Jean. I—I never really understood you until to-night, although we have known each other for so long. Let me explain. I chanced to go to the kitchen just as you pushed open the door leading to the little parlor. From where I stood I also saw Telesphore with the money in his hand. His position was such that he could not see me. I heard your frightened cry to him to put it back; heard you say it would break his father's heart, and also heard you say" (there was a tenderness now in her voice very sweet to hear), "that

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you would help him if he were in trouble. You stepped towards him and I turned away."

He would have interrupted her here had she not stayed him with a gesture and continued, "I was sitting in a corner of the dining-room when you both came out of the kitchen, and from the expression on Telesphore's face I knew you had kept the promise I had heard you make to him—that you had helped him." She hesitated again and then concluded, "It was indeed very noble of you, Jean; especially after the way I—"

She stopped confusedly, and as his strong hand closed over the little one resting on his arm he said softly: "You meant to say especially after the way you danced with Telesphore to-night?"

She did not reply, but there was that in her manner which gave him a courage he feared he would never have with her, and he went on abruptly: "Indeed I cannot tell you how very unhappy it made me to see him so taken up with you, and—you with him."

"It was mischief on my part," she said shyly, "and also on his: for he had confided in me there was a certain young lady in the United States—"

"That he loved as dearly as I love you, Alice?"

The words had sprung impulsively to his lips and he waited with apprehension for her answer.

She drew a little closer to him, and after they had walked quite a little distance her low voice reached him: "Yes, as dearly as you love me, Jean."

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THE UNCLAIMED REWARD

The Unclaimed Reward

CHAPTER I.

SCARCELY had the foundry whistle begun its discordant roar than Sam Lewis, foreman of the pattern shop, thrust his arms into his coat with feverish haste, and strode out of the room. He was a small, wiry-looking man of about middle age with a somewhat sallow complexion and peculiarly piercing grey eyes.

One of the men, who had noted the foreman's exit, muttered to himself, as he cleaned his hands with a piece of waste: "I wonder what is the matter with Lewis; he used to be the last man to leave the shop at night, when the whistle blew, instead of the first. He seems all nerves this while back; something's on his mind, sure."

The object of his conjectures was already well out of the foundry yard, and with dogged air and firm, eager steps was swinging towards Dufresne Street, one of the most picturesque of the many quaint streets in ancient Quebec.

On reaching number 222, which was heralded by a huge glaring sign as being a private boarding-house, he pushed open the door and, without slacking speed, mounted the flight of stairs which led to the first

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landing. Instead of going to his room, on the flat higher, he turned into the kitchen and asked if there were any letters for him. Being told there was one in his room, he turned without further remark, and a few seconds later his firm footfalls were heard in the room overhead.

It was late in the fall and the gloom was already such as to prevent him seeing the envelope which lay on a small bureau. Hastily lighting a lamp, his eye caught the looked-for letter. Without looking at the address he rent the envelope apart and bending his stern begrimed face nearer the lamp, cast his eyes with tense eagerness along the typewritten words on the official looking notepaper.

Suddenly the letter fluttered from his hands and he exclaimed in a low, fierce tone: "And this is all the news they have after two months' hunting! I can endure it no longer; the thought of him lying in his grave unavenged is maddening." Turning to the window behind him he gazed with uncomprehending eyes at the street below. The letter lay as it had fallen, face upward, near the bureau, the light revealing every word. It read:

"MR. SAMUEL LEWIS,
Dufresne Street,
Quebec.

"*Dear Sir,*—Despite all our efforts to capture Jack Reynolds, alias Jack Sinclare, who two months ago murdered Charles Thurston, and for whose arrest two thousand dollars have been offered, we have been

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unable to get the slightest trace of him. Telegrams, however, describing him have been sent to all the large cities in Europe, and on this continent, and we hope that he may yet be apprehended."

The letter was from New York and was signed: "T. Ferguson, Chief of Detective Bureau."

Finally turning from the window, the pattern-maker, with a peculiar look, fixed his eyes in a strange, hesitating way on an old trunk in a corner of the room. Presently a decisive look flashed into his face, and hastening to the trunk he knelt down beside it, passed his hand over and over the dingy lid, and muttered in a low voice: "Events, over which I have no control, are stretching out unseen hands to drag me back to the old scenes and—" He paused, and then went on in a still lower key: "And perhaps to the old life—the old life!"

With the tense look again showing on his face, he drew from his pocket a thin steel key and inserted it in the lock of the trunk. As he was about to shoot back the lock his eyes fell upon a small Bible which lay open on a chair by his side, where he had laid it the night previous before retiring, and he read the words: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, how can ye—"

With an exclamation of resentment, he turned from the book and muttered bitterly: "But trespasses such as *murder* are not to be forgiven?" With lowering face he crouched in silence for several

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seconds and then went on: "It can't mean this; it would be too much. I have kept right for five years, but now—"

As he threw back his hand, in his restlessness and perplexity, it encountered the chair, and the Bible slid from it to the floor.

In its chance fall it had opened at a new passage, and as he stooped to pick it up he read the words: "An eye for an eye."

The words had a marvellous effect upon him; the troubled, rebellious look vanished and was replaced with one of the keenest satisfaction. Straightening his shoulders, he said fiercely: "It is a message to me and means that blood must not go unavenged! 'An eye for an eye!'" As he repeated the words his hands clenched.

His mind now at ease, his natural coolness and decision of character returned. Quietly rising, he changed his clothes and put the room in order, as though about to leave it for some time. Then he turned to the trunk, and as he again inserted the key in the lock the peculiar hesitancy, half fear, half dread, was once more plainly visible. "How I long, yet dread, to see the things again. Ah, the strange fascinating days of the past!" he muttered under his breath.

It was only when his eyes fell upon the letter with the light still shining upon it, telling of the inability of the detectives to arrest the murderer of Charlie Thurston, that his mood again changed. He

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turned the key with a resoluteness that left the dint of it in his fingers.

As he threw back the lid there was nothing strange revealed, only a slouch hat and a nondescript suit of clothes; but down underneath the clothes there were other things. Almost lovingly he took up the suit, piece by piece, and laid it on the floor. Then he felt under some other garments and drew from the bottom of the trunk a peculiar leather case about two feet in length and nine inches deep. Touching a spring there was disclosed a revolver of unusual beauty; there were also in the case several highly polished instruments. To have been the possessor of one of them, under certain circumstances, would have meant years of incarceration in the penitentiary.

He examined the revolver and each of the pieces with the utmost carefulness and lingeringly polished the mysterious instruments with his coat sleeve. Putting them back into their hiding-place he got a valise from under the bed and put the old suit and the leather case into it.

Before leaving the room he picked up the letter, read it again and said meaningly: "And so, Jack Reynolds, the detectives cannot find you; but I have an idea that I can; I have an idea that I can!" Strange words from the lips of the quiet man who had been looked upon by his comrades at the shop as being more than usually untaught in the ways of the world.

Valise in hand he stood, a few minutes later, in the study of the minister to whom for so many years

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he had been such an enigma, but who honored him for the sterling, upright life he had lived.

He had felt that he could not go upon his mission without in some way having the minister's approval.

Laying his valise on the floor, he turned to the minister and said quietly: "I am going away, Mr. Marling; I—I hardly know for how long. I thought I would like to let you know; then I have something to ask you."

Little wonder that the minister looked up in surprise. Five years ago this man had suddenly appeared in Quebec, from whence no one knew, and had scarcely once since been out of the shadow of the city. He had begun to attend the Rev. Mr. Marling's church and had been made welcome. Never, however, did he refer to his past.

With the advent of years the curiosity concerning him had grown less, but never died out.

With a slight smile the minister said: "The idea of you leaving the city, Mr. Lewis, is a surprise, indeed." Growing grave, he added: "I hope you have received no bad news from—" He was going to add, "friends," but he had not known the patternmaker to receive a letter from relations or any one else, and so paused.

Before the minister could continue the patternmaker said slowly: "My news is not good news, and I wish I had not to go away." Looking down at the bag which hid the dingy suit and the strange leather case, he continued firmly: "It is the duty of every man, is it not, to do what he can to assist the law?"

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Had the minister known more about the past life of the man before him, and had his characteristics been less peculiar, he might have asked for a more explicit question. With a slight note of query in his voice, he answered: "It is the duty of all men to do what they can to see the laws are not ignored."

Appearing not to have noticed the enquiry in the minister's voice, the patternmaker took up the valise and held out his hand.

Again the wish to question his visitor came over the minister; but the fear of raising the impression that he had begun to doubt this strange member of his flock again closed his lips. Grasping the outstretched hand he said in a voice of deep feeling: "I shall look forward to your return with a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Lewis."

"The thought of that," answered the patternmaker, with strange emotion, "will, I think, make my return sure." Then he strode abruptly from the room, leaving the minister gazing after him with a perplexed and troubled brow.

Among the passengers who left Quebec that night for New York was the patternmaker.

CHAPTER II.

WEAVING THE FIRST STRANDS OF THE WEB.

THE lights were already gleaming, the following night, in the great American metropolis, when the patternmaker stepped from the train. Without a moment's hesitation, he hurried, valise in hand, out into the streets, and choosing the most deserted thoroughfares headed for the worst portion of the whole city—Five Points.

Arriving in this quarter, he halted in front of a disreputable-looking saloon and peered at the name over the door. "Joe Stivers" was printed in letters which long ago, under the influence of age and weather, had relinquished all claims to respectability.

"Alive yet!" There was an intonation of surprise and satisfaction in the patternmaker's voice.

He walked half a block further on and hired a room in a dingy house on the opposite side of the street. The moment he found himself alone in the room he took the soiled, worn suit and battered hat from the valise. A look of satisfaction played on his features as he arrayed himself in them. It was years since he had worn the clothes and they were connected with strange memories.

Not one in quaint old Quebec would have known him when he left the room: besides the change the

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clothes had made, the walk, the expression, the very personality of the man was transformed.

He crossed the road to the saloon, and as he was about to enter it, muttered: "If Reynolds is ever caught the web that is to entangle him must have its origin here."

Paying no attention to the crowd at the bar he sauntered to a long room behind it, a concert hall, and quietly seated himself in a corner. An ancient pianist was making desperate and doleful efforts to assist a boisterous and reprehensible song, which was being sung by a sorry-looking individual under the influence of liquor.

Covertly the patternmaker ran his eyes over the motley assembly. Now and then his gaze dwelt upon some particular visage; yet there was a look of disappointment on his face as he finally leaned back and pulled his hat further over his eyes.

The waiter came and he ordered something to drink; the absence of a glass before him he knew would attract attention more than anything else. Not a face that entered or left the room, from his entrance until the place closed, escaped his notice. Night after night he might have been seen in the same vile resort, apparently careless and listless, but in truth always alert, always covertly watching. In order not to create suspicion he entered now and then into conversation with some straggler.

It was the sixth night of his visit, and it was close upon midnight. He was sitting at the back of the hall, unmindful of the babel of tongues and the wails

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of the ill-used piano, with his chin resting upon his breast, and his whole attitude denoting slumber. But, suddenly, his half-closed eyes began to burn under the heavy shadow of the hat—the change had been wrought by the entrance of an old man, with a thin, shrewd face, who sat down at a small table near the patternmaker, and ordered a glass of whiskey.

Scarcely had he seated himself, when the patternmaker rose, and gliding behind his chair, said, in a low, joking tone: "Glad to see you patronize the old place, Rand!"

There was something in the intonation of the speaker's voice which the old man recognized, for he was on his feet in a moment and gazing with astonishment and pleasure into the patternmaker's face. "Bill Powers, by heavens, Bill Powers!" he exclaimed, as he grasped the patternmaker's hand. "This is a surprise," he went on, as he sat down and pointed to a chair; "I had made up my mind that you had been sporting under a tombstone, years ago. Some of the old boys are up at the bar there; they'll be glad to see you, come on and see them." He rose again.

By way of reply, the patternmaker laid his hand on the old man's arm, and said, in a low voice: "Not to-night, Rand; I want to have a talk with you first. Where are you living, now? There's too many around here for much talking."

The old man sat with apparent good humor, but, in his keen, penetrating eyes there was a dawn of suspicion, and he said, lightly: "All right, I'll take

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you to where I live in a minute. But, by the way, where have you been all these years? You only were sent up for five, and now it is—is, yes, it is fully ten years since you went away." He paused, and then went on in a tone in which suspicion was plainly discernible: "You haven't turned a decoy for the detectives, I suppose, and come back here because you happen to know the ropes?" There was a smile on his face, but his listener understood.

Looking down at his seedy garments, the patternmaker answered. "Decoys that detectives use are generally dressed better than I am; don't you think so, Rand?" He laughed grimly.

The devil-may-care and ironical way in which the terse answer was made, convinced Rand as no amount of elaborate argument could have done, and rising, he said, laughingly: "Well, you don't look very flashy, that's sure. Come to where I hang out."

Ten minutes later, they were in the old man's room; a well-furnished one, but still in a disreputable part of the city. Pushing a bottle across the table to the patternmaker, the old man said: "Now, where have you been since you served your five?"

The patternmaker calmly poured out some liquor, and then said, listlessly: "I tried for a time, after I got out, to live on the square; but it was hard work, and so for the past three or four years, I have been drifting from place to place, seeing things and giving the papers, now and then, something to write about. A while ago, the detectives got it into their heads that they really must see me again, and so I thought

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I would come back to the old place, and lay low for a time. That's the reason I don't want to see any of the old boys, yet."

Under the influence of the liquor, the old man grew more talkative. In the whole of the great city, there was not another man who had disposed of, without detection, such an immense amount of stolen jewelry and other valuables. Although his lust of gold was great, he was known as being peculiarly loyal to the class who hazarded so much to acquire what was not their own. He recalled the names and deeds of men who, a few years ago, were famous in the criminal world, but who were now serving long terms, as well as referred, with much pride, to many who were still in the "calling." Finally he said, with a laugh, as he looked at the patternmaker, who had listened with subtle attention: "But you were missed more than any of the others, for none of them could—"

At this juncture, the patternmaker deftly turned the conversation to some other celebrity.

It was almost morning when the patternmaker rose to go, and at last broached the subject which had made him seek the old man so patiently, and which had been seething in his mind the whole evening. "By the way," he said, as he pushed back his chair and fastened his threadbare coat, "whatever has become of Reynolds? I heard a rumor, somewhere, that he had got into bother of some kind, and that there was a reward offered for him."

Had a bucket of icy water been dashed over the receiver of stolen goods, he could not have been more

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thoroughly sobered from the effects of the liquor he had taken, than by this question. His outward manner, however, showed but little change, but inwardly, every sense was alive with keen suspicion. "Yes," he answered, with a clever attempt at ingenuousness, "Reynolds has got into bother, and there's money offered for him; he must be safe out of the country. He's an ugly chap to deal with." His intonation would have deceived almost anyone.

But, while he was speaking, the patternmaker had, with pretended intoxication, looked into the old man's eyes, and in a twinkling, saw what did not deceive him. He showed no further interest in the matter, however, and pulling his hat over his forehead, shuffled out of the house, after arranging to meet Rand the following night.

Marvellous was the change that came over the patternmaker on reaching the street. The carelessness which had characterized him all evening vanished; his firmly carved mouth took on still deeper lines; his hands clenched—his whole bearing spoke of unswerving resolution: "He lied," he muttered as he strode along; "I saw it in his face, shrewd as he is. He knows where the murderer is hiding, and I could swear is in communication with him. As I thought, the villain has no more left the country than I have. The detectives have failed to find him, but I shall not, I shall not!" Of the great danger which surrounded such a resolution, he was fully aware, yet his heart did not beat a whit the quicker. In some men

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the sleuth-hound is largely developed—it was in this man, and with it an utter ignorance of fear.

CHAPTER III.

THE RELENTLESS SHADOW.

ALL through the hours which intervened till the patternmaker was to meet Rand again the following night, a pair of eyes—those of the patternmaker—watched the old man's house from an alleyway across the street. It was almost afternoon when Rand's meagre figure appeared in the door-way. After watching the old man's retreating figure till it was nearly out of sight the patternmaker glided after it. To his chagrin, however, Rand only took a long walk and returned again to his home without calling anywhere. In order never to lose sight of Rand, whom he believed held the key to the mystery which the detectives would have given so much to solve, the patternmaker, within two hours after leaving the object of his designs, was, with his valise, the occupant of a new room—one directly opposite Rand's house.

Later in the night in question, and for many nights afterwards, the patternmaker met Rand at his house, and talked of men and things which would have amazed those with whom he had worked in Quebec; but never again did he mention the name of the out-

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law, Reynolds; to have again aroused Rand's suspicions would have ruined all his plans.

At times he followed in the wake of the old man for miles, but he never saw him enter a resort where there was any likelihood of the murderer being in hiding. When Rand was not on the streets, the alert, watchful eyes were always at the window. The time was drawing near when pregnant events were to follow these days of patient watching.

For over a week the nights had been almost as clear as noonday, and more than once the patternmaker had seen Rand cast anxious glances at the placid sky, and noted looks of annoyance flit over his face. He had also shown strange signs of irritableness. That the weather was, in some remarkable way, the cause of this queer irritation, began gradually to dawn on the patternmaker's mind.

"But why should it affect him?" he asked himself over and over again. Was it possible that the old man had some project to put into execution which the moon's clear rays hampered?

The question was answered the very next day, which broke cloudy and threatening. In the afternoon the patternmaker met Rand, as though by accident, on the street, and the old man told him he had better not come round that night as he had found he would not be in (the evening previous, however, he had said that he would have nowhere to go). His irritableness, too, had vanished, and while speaking he had cast an involuntary glance upward,

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and for the briefest space an expression of satisfaction lit up his face.

"There is more brewing than what is in the clouds," thought the patternmaker, but he made an uninterested reply as he turned away in an opposite direction to that in which the old man was going. But when Rand entered his house the relentless shadow was not an hundred yards behind him.

By seven o'clock it was pitch dark and pouring rain. The restless eyes of the patternmaker had not been able to pierce the increasing gloom any longer, and so he was stationed in a shadowy doorway, near Rand's house, where he must surely see any one who entered or left. At short intervals gusts of wind drove the rain into the watcher's face and saturated his clothing, but he paid no heed to it. Under his arm was the leather case containing the glittering instruments; but the revolver, which was loaded with the greatest of care, was in his coat pocket—close to his hand.

The minutes sped on, and the rain fell heavier and heavier, yet he watched with unabated patience. His eyes had now become accustomed to the increasing darkness and he could see more clearly. Suddenly he started; the door of Rand's house began to open, and so noiselessly, that, had he trusted to his hearing, he would have been utterly unaware of the fact. The watchful eyes presently saw Rand appear in the doorway; saw him close and lock the door as noiselessly as he had opened it, and then, picking up a large carpet-bag, glide quickly down the street. The carpet-

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bag, the flitting shadow noted, was heavy, far too heavy to be merely the fruits of the smelting-pot, and his heart beat eagerly—he believed the bag was the key to the situation.

Meeting a cab, the old man hailed it, and, after giving some instructions to the driver, was whirled away. For a time the shadow trotted after the cab, but finally it also vanished into a vehicle, which followed in the wake of the first.

As expected by the pursuer, the first cab stopped at a railway station. Rand hurried from it and up to the ticket office. The occupant of the second cab left it before the station was quite reached.

There was already a crowd at the ticket office and Rand had to wait his turn. He appeared not to mind the delay, yet, at short intervals he glanced covertly from side to side. When finally his turn came he could have sworn there was no one near him; yet the moment he put his head in the wicket and asked for his ticket, the figure of the patternmaker, as though by some strange art, appeared directly behind him, on the outer side of the railing, and leaned over it as though anxious to accost the ticket seller.

When Rand once more glanced suspiciously round, the figure had flitted away. Rand gave a sigh of relief, and, hurrying away, got on board the express. When the conductor took up the tickets, the figure which had shadowed Rand so faithfully was on board the same train, and in the car next to the one Rand

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was seated in. His ticket, too, read like Rand's: "To Carnsville and return."

When the train rushed into the quiet little station of Carnsville, the patternmaker sprang from it before it had stopped, and, screening himself in the shadow of the station, watched eagerly. To his intense astonishment he saw he was the only passenger for the place, and before he could form a plan what to do, the conductor had given the signal, the train rushed on, and he was left standing alone.

"Outwitted!" The exclamation fell from the patternmaker's lips with a fierceness that spoke thoroughly of his disappointment. Rand's destination, after all, had not been Carnsville. To add to his anger, he was told there would not be a train to New York for several hours.

When he reached the city again the morning was well advanced, and he saw, by the blinds on Rand's house, that its occupant had returned; at night, when the lights might have revealed its interior, they were religiously closed. Again the relentless eyes took up the watch at the window; again Rand never left his house but what he was shadowed, and again they met at night.

For some days the old man appeared at ease and was good tempered, but after that the strange restlessness, the furtive glances at the once more clear sky returned, and were swiftly noted by the patternmaker, who had perfected plans that he felt positive would not again be thwarted.

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At daybreak on the morning of the tenth day the wind veered to the south and drove before it clouds that promised to deeply veil the face of the moon that night. Early as the change occurred, the watcher had seen it, and a look of satisfaction crossed his face. "I know he will go again to-night," he said, softly, to himself, "and then—" He did not complete the sentence; but the look of confidence spoke clearly of what he believed the termination of the journey would this time be.

When night arrived the clouds were somewhat less sullen than during most of the day, and at long intervals the moon managed to catch brief glances of the city; but so brief, indeed, that there was little danger of its light betraying the figure of the patternmaker, which was hidden once more in a doorway near to that of Rand's. Again under his arm was the leather case, and close to his hand the revolver, which was so soon to be needed. He was so certain the old man would take the journey again this night that he waited without the slightest tremor of impatience. Even when Rand glided from the house, it was not excitement or impatience which made him, for an instant, glide so perilously near him—it was to satisfy himself of what he expected: that the carpet-bag was again in his hand.

This time the old man's figure was not shadowed to the station; but when he took his seat in the railway car the patternmaker was already seated at the back of it, but so cleverly disguised that recognition was practically impossible. The shadow could now see

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where the figure it dogged left the train—it looked, indeed, as though there was to be no mistake now!

The train sped on and on. There remained now but one station before Carnsville—Crossley—and the patternmaker wondered whether, on the previous journey, Rand had got off at this station or had got off at the one beyond Carnsville, and had thus eluded possible pursuit. His curiosity was soon to be satisfied. When they were about a mile from Crossley, the brakeman thrust his head into the car and called out the name of the station. As he did so, the patternmaker's eyes were fixed watchfully on Rand's figure, but the old man gave no signs of preparing to get off at this point. A few seconds later there was a sensation that the mighty, rolling mass was being retarded in its rapid flight; the wheels creaked at the irresistible bands which grasped them; there was a hasty heave forward, and then silence. Again the brakeman poked his head into the car. "Crossley station!" he yelled. Still Rand made no attempt to leave. The patternmaker was leaning wearily against the back of the car, as though asleep. The train began to move again; a quick walk was reached. It was now that Rand quietly rose, cigar in one hand and bag in the other, and sauntered from the car; only one of those who chanced to notice him doubted that his destination was to be the smoking car. The moment Rand banged the door to, his *sang-froid* vanished; turning quickly, he ran down the steps of the car and sprang to the ground. He stood in a listening attitude for a

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time, but the only sounds which reached him were made by the roar of the train as it rapidly increased its flight.

Had the darkness been less intense he would have seen, to his dismay, another figure silently standing not far from him, and which had also sprung from the train shortly after he had. When the lights of the train vanished, the old man, without a moment's hesitation, strode across the track, climbed the fence that hedged it in, cut across a field, and then gained a country road. Without dreaming to look to see if he was being followed, he kept along the road for about a mile, and then suddenly branched to the right down a narrow, overgrown path, evidently but rarely used. It ran for about an eighth of a mile and then came to an abrupt termination in front of a house of ancient design. Although the darkness was still intense, the old man, without faltering, cut, in a direct line, across the deep, rank grass, which had away in past years been cut close and served as a lawn, till he reached the house. Then he felt his way along the wall till he came to the back of the house, where he found a small but massive door, and knocked upon it in a manner as though giving a signal. Scarcely had he done so when it was cautiously opened. When it was rapidly and noiselessly closed again, the only human form in the vicinity was the shadowy one which had so unfalteringly kept the trail all the way from the station.

An exultant feeling filled the patternmaker's breast as the moon for a moment struggled through the

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clouds and shone upon the massive old structure. It was two stories in height, and, from the depth of the windows, he could see that the walls were of remarkable thickness. As he stood in the darkness, he wondered for a moment what could be the history of the deserted, strange, old structure.

Old residents of the district spoke in whispers of the house and would not go near it for superstitious reasons. Many years ago it was alleged that a son had been foully dealt with by his father in the place, and with the death of the father the inevitable came—the rumors of the wayward youth getting beyond the mighty barriers which bar the dead from the living, and mournfully wandering through the deserted rooms of the old house.

Under the mantle of darkness, the patternmaker made a circuit of the house and tried the windows. They were, as he had expected, firmly fastened from within.

Leaving the house, he hid in the deep grass, not far from the door which had swallowed up Rand, and watched and listened with dog-like patience. Now and then the moon lit up the sombre structure, but revealed nothing which might have made one suspect it was inhabited. But the watcher knew and waited.

An hour must have stolen slowly away when the faintest sound of a door opening was wafted to his keen ears, as were, too, a few brief, whispered words—then all was silent again. To make sure that he had only one now left to deal with, the shadow cut across a field which he knew must bring him to the narrow,

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overgrown path, and lying down near the fence, waited. The sounds of footsteps fell upon his ears almost immediately, and by a flash of the moon, almost as brief and dazzling as lightning, he saw a hand hurrying along the narrow path towards the main road with the carpet-bag, which was now folded and empty, under his arm.

"He has smuggled him the last food he will ever eat there." The tone in which the patternmaker uttered the words, as he turned for the last time towards the house, would alone have been fully appreciated by men who know what it is to hourly carry their lives in their hands, and who never give an enemy a chance to shoot first.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMPLETION OF THE WEB.

Upon reaching the house again the patternmaker passed his hand carefully along the sash of one of the windows until his thumb-nail encountered a slight crevice, and then, stooping quickly, he laid the leather case, which he had so jealously guarded, on the ground and touched a spring. The moon was shining again and as the lid sprang back there was revealed a set of burglars' tools such as only the most adept burglars ever possess. To be able to make one of such instruments was to place a burglar at once at the very head of his perilous calling. Years ago, long before he had gone to Quebec, the patternmaker had made every piece in the case; attached to the tools were memories that affected him strangely.

Taking up an instrument, something like an S in shape, and known to the "fraternity" by the peculiar name of "mule," he wormed one of the razor-like ends into the crevice, about half an inch, and then pressed lightly upon the extreme end of the instrument; light as was the pressure, the entire sash, massive and barred though it was, plainly showed the severe strain upon it. A little more strain would have torn the fastenings away as though they had been mere threads—the tool, with

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ease, would have hoisted a door from its hinges. He applied the pressure with the utmost caution; to have made a noise would have been to ruin everything. He knew that the criminal, whom he believed was hidden in the house, would shoot the man who would attempt to capture him as unhesitatingly as he would a rat.

Such was the skill, however, with which the patternmaker applied the pressure that one might almost have been in the very room and been unconscious of the moment the sash finally parted with its fastenings.

At last the window was raised high enough to admit the patternmaker's body. After he had drawn himself up he pulled off his boots, once more felt for his revolver and then slid into the room, which was intensely dark. Lying on the floor he put his ear to the boards and listened intently—silence reigned in the place. Patiently he waited for the moon to shine again so he could see where the door was.

He must have waited half an hour before it streamed into the room and revealed the great oak door at the extreme left. Before the light vanished again he had reached the door, in his cat-like manner, and with another small, highly tempered instrument was removing the hinges, bodily, from it with as much ease as one would draw a nail. When the door was removed he found, by groping his way, that he was in a broad passage which led to a narrow flight of stairs, evidently going to the basement. Cautiously he began to descend.

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Lest a step, made infirm by age, should creak and betray his presence, he carefully tested them all before resting the weight of his body upon them. The darkness was now so intense that his eyes ached under it. Step by step, with exceeding care, he went down and down on his perilous mission. It seemed as though the steps would never end, but at last his foot encountered something hard and cold. Stooping and feeling with his hand he found that he had reached a stone landing, evidently the basement or cellar of the house. Fearing that he might come into contact with some obstacle, he now moved forward on hands and knees.

The clammy flagstones, the impressive silence, the darkness which could almost be felt, coupled with the great danger of the quest, would have struck a chill to most men, but not to the patternmaker; in past days he had often gone through scenes as trying. On and on he went, encountering nothing, seeing nothing. Suddenly he caught his breath and stopped: the distinct sound of the pulling of a cork had fallen upon his ears. Revolver in hand he crouched close to the wall, but no fresh sound broke the stillness. For the first time his heart began to beat quickly, not with fear, but with that strange eagerness which a soldier experiences when he is ordered to the front. Again he crept forward. He could hardly control his patience.

Again he halted, this time scarcely able to suppress the exclamation which sprang to his lips; there, a little to the left—there was no mistaking

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it—was a feeble glimmer of light. From its close proximity to the ground he knew it must be coming from under a door. When nearer the spot he saw another light, a round, steady stream, which fell slantingly from the keyhole upon an abutment in the wall. Would the light in the room be in such a position that he could see who its occupant was? The question had scarcely presented itself before he had raised himself and was looking through the hole: the light could not have been in a better position; the room, as well as its occupant, was clearly revealed. Seated at a table, upon which the tell-tale lamp stood, was a man evidently about forty years of age; his coat and vest were off and through the tight-fitting woolen shirt the well developed muscles of his shoulders showed to perfection. His neck was short and thick, while his great hands gave every indication of unusual strength. He was eating ravenously, and by his side stood a bottle. The watcher knew it was the food that Rand had brought.

The room was long, and, as far as the watcher could see, was without windows. The door, through which the light was stealing, was evidently the only entrance to the place.

Burying his head in his hands, the patternmaker tried to solve the desperate problem of how to get into the room without attracting attention. The absurd thought of trying to find out if the door was locked never for a moment came to him. Neither did it for an instant occur to the ravenous eater, that in

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his eagerness to appease his appetite, he had merely pushed the door to, after getting the food from Rand, and that it was not, as usual, securely barred and locked. With the door at the back of the house he had not made this grave oversight.

It was by the merest chance that the Nemesis at the door became aware of the fatal error of the man he had hunted so doggedly—his arm had happened to press against the door, and to his amazement he saw it open about the breadth of a finger. Before putting the plan which at once formed in his mind into execution, he took the tools from his pocket and laid them against the wall, looked through the key-hole again to see if the back of the feaster was still turned to him, and then began to push the door back so slowly that it seemed to open imperceptibly. Presently the muzzle of a revolver and anon the hand that grasped it were in the room. Wider and wider yawned the door. Now the eyes of the relentless hunter, almost on a level with the floor, gleamed in the doorway; he was writhing his way into the room, on his stomach, as would a snake. At last his body was half way into the chamber, yet from his peculiar position he dared not hazard a shot; then he did not want to shed blood unless he was driven in self-defence to do so; his plan was to deliver the man up to the law.

The writhing body abruptly stopped its contortions—the man at the table had suddenly stopped eating and there was a strange, drawn look on his brutal face. For a few moments he sat perfectly rigid, listening as though fascinated. He had heard

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nothing, seen nothing, yet he was overpowered with that strange creeping sensation of the close proximity of someone, or something, at a moment when he thought it was impossible for anyone to be near. His guilt and superstition, for the first time, weighed upon him, and he pictured the wraith of the youth he had murdered towering in mystic shape behind him.

But could he be *tracked*? The terrible question swept away his superstitious fears and roused the great desire of self-preservation. With blanched face he sprang round, revolver in hand. In a moment all was revealed to him; there was a flash, a loud report, and the bullet from his revolver buried itself in the woodwork, scarcely a hair's breadth above the patternmaker's head. His action had been so sudden that the patternmaker had had no time to defend himself.

"Move and I'll fire again." The revolver was now pointing squarely between the patternmaker's eyes. It would have been madness not to have obeyed. After a short undecided silence he spoke again. "Get up and let's see you; but try and raise your hands and I'll drop you." He broke into an unpleasant laugh and added, "But dropping is likely to come your way anyhow."

Slowly the patternmaker rose, trying as he did so to screen his revolver from view, but the effort was futile. Scarcely had he reached his feet when his captor, still covering him with his revolver, walked slowly towards him, saying as he did so: "I'll take that toy you're trying to hide there."

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The patternmaker's face might have been a mask, such was its utter lack of expression. But when his captor was within three feet of him an amazing change came over his features: his eyes, which had been fixed with apparent calmness upon the fierce, alert ones of his captor, suddenly shot, with an expression of intense horror, to the far end of the room; his teeth chattered together, while every limb shook as though palsied. Had hades suddenly yawned at the back of his captor and unfolded some dire, fearful vision, the expression of deadly fear upon the patternmaker's visage could not have been more marked. Such was the infection of horror which emanated from the apparently fear-stricken man that the murderer involuntarily turned partly round, for the moment forgetting everything. Natural as was his action it was a terrible mistake—his revolver was now pointing away from the man who had so cleverly tricked him. Before he could recover himself the patternmaker had sprung forward and his revolver was within six inches of the still partly averted face.

"Drop your gun or I will pull the trigger." There was something so decisive in the low tone of the patternmaker's voice that the revolver fell from the murderer's hand almost mechanically.

"Now move over to the table and sit down. Don't dare to turn."

Again the tricked man obeyed.

Picking up the fallen revolver the patternmaker walked over to the table and seated himself opposite his captive. Their eyes met. A fierce expression

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mantled the murderer's face; he looked like some desperate animal driven to bay. Covering him with his firearm the patternmaker raised his left hand and pulled from his head and face the disguises he had worn while on the train when he had dogged Rand, and which he had not before removed. The look of mute astonishment which overspread the murderer's face when he recognized his captor was so striking and sudden that it would have been comical under less tragic circumstances. The look was quickly followed by one of intense relief, and partly rising, he ejaculated: "Bill Powers, Bill Powers, by God!" There was a touch of confidence, mingled with supplication, in his manner as he held out his hand toward the patternmaker.

But the weapon still covered him and the relentless look still remained unchanged on the patternmaker's face.

"Sit down."

The man obeyed, but he fought to keep the look of confidence.

"When daylight comes, Jack Reynolds, alias Jack Sinclare, I shall take you by train to New York and deliver you up to the police authorities for the murder of Charlie Thurston." The patternmaker spoke in a slow, methodical manner.

Silently the murderer looked into the patternmaker's face to see whether or not he really meant what he had said, and also trying to concoct some way of getting free.

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Finally he leaned slightly forward and said in a low, earnest tone: "I can't believe, Bill, that you've turned detective and would run an old pal to the ground; you didn't use to be the sort that 'ud down a man for blood money; you were always straight, you were. No one was sorrier than me when you got jugged for that long term. When your time was up all the boys kept expecting you, but you didn't come back. We hardly knew what to do for tools; you were the boss of the roost for making them, Bill. You don't know how queer it seems to see you sitting here and working this scare on me, that you're going to give me up to those fool detectives. As I have said, Bill, you're no blood-money man, you aint."

In the same quiet tone the patternmaker replied: "No, I am no blood-money man; it's not for the reward that I'm delivering you up; it's to do justice to the lad that is lying in his grave, and whom you murdered. If I were offered a million to let you go, I wouldn't take it."

The uncompromising reply shook the desperado. It was only by the greatest effort that he restrained from giving utterance to the violent words which rushed to his lips. In his heart he knew there was no hope, yet he made another attempt—goaded by the fate before him—to obtain his liberty. In all his selfish, checkered career he had never known what it was to plead, but he did so now. Once more he recalled the past, claiming his captor as a chum, and ending by begging him to give him a chance.

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Could he only turn the tables again, and get the patternmaker in his power he would show him no mercy, and his captor knew it.

When he ceased his appeal, the patternmaker said, in a tense voice: "It's hard, Reynolds, to sit and hear a man like you claim me as a chum; it's true I was once, but by heavens, I am not now. I have told you that I shall deliver you up and—"

"And then you will claim the two thousand dollars reward; that's your game." The desperate man's voice rang loudly through the room; he could contain himself no longer. "You're a detectives' sneak, that's what you are," he went on, his voice rising.

The accusation seemed to anger the patternmaker, and his face, for the first time, flushed as he said, with an effort to restrain himself: "You can think what you like; but that's a lie!"

"Then, what have you hunted me down for? Is it for glory?"

"I will tell you," answered the patternmaker, in a voice which betrayed his deep emotion; "the young fellow you stabbed was my brother!"

Forgetful of his danger, the murderer sprang to his feet, and bending almost half way over the table, said: "You lie, Bill Powers, you lie! His name was Charlie Thurston, and though you've changed *your* name over and over again, I know it's Powers." As he ceased he suddenly raised his enormous fist.

The patternmaker did not leave his seat; but his eyes were fixed on the uplifted hand, and his sinewy fingers were wrapped around the trigger of the

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revolver in a perilously uncertain manner. Had the huge fist fallen, the voice of the revolver would have been heard.

"There, don't fire!" The murderer had suddenly seen his great danger and had sunk down in his chair again.

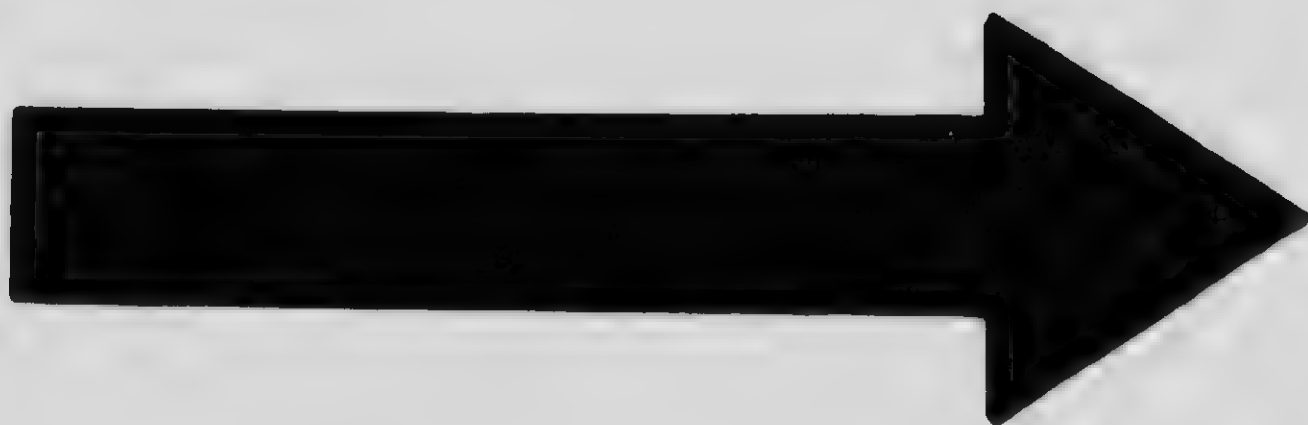
The patternmaker began to speak once more. There was a hard ring in his tones: "What I have said is true, the lad was my brother. It is right that you should know the reasons why I have tracked you down. You can believe them or not, as you like. It is true that my name is Powers, and it was a respected one before I went wrong, joined the class you belong to, and was sent to the penitentiary ten years ago. My disgrace got in the papers and it drove my brother away from the little town he was living in, and he came to New York, where he changed his name to Thurston. After I had served a year of my sentence, I got a lawyer to look him up; he was my only brother—and little more than a grown boy. He found him in New York in a miserable situation and trying to save enough money to enable him to get an education. I had money put by before my disgrace came, and I managed so he could get it. The lawyer pretended to him that an aged gentleman, a distant relation of ours, had died and had left him the money, which was enough to see him through school and also college—I knew he would never accept it from me."

He paused for a moment and then went on in a less hard tone. "Had it not been for the comfort of

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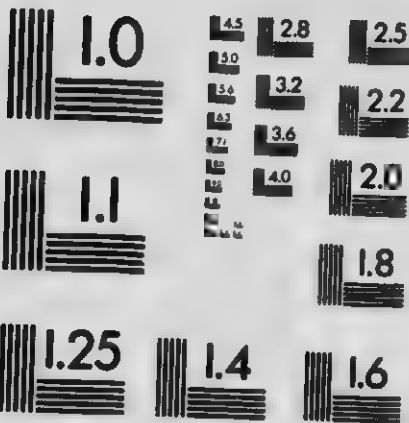
being able to help him, I do not know how I could have endured those long years of imprisonment; I always loved him passionately; perhaps it was because he was so much younger than I, and because he was almost alone in the world—our parents died when he was in his infancy and he lived with relations. After my term had expired I went to another country and changed my name, took a position as patternmaker, and have lived honorably. During the time I was in the penitentiary, and after I left it, I got reports about my brother, learned that he had done well at the high school, and was also doing well at college; the thought of his future success was the brightest thing in my life,"—his voice suddenly grew harsher—"Had it not been for you he would have passed his final examinations months ago and would have had M.D. after his name; but you cut him off without a moment's warning, cut him off just when reward for all his toil was in view.

"There is no need of dwelling upon your infamous deed. You stabbed him to the heart because he surprised you robbing the house he was living in. From the things you left behind, it was well known who had committed the deed. I learned of it through the papers. I waited for weeks hoping the detectives would capture you, but the papers were silent as to your whereabouts. At last I wrote to the detectives, saying I was a relation, and asking them if they had any trace of you, but they replied that they had none; I could endure the suspense no longer and set out on your trail myself. I would have sought you before



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but for a strange dread that if I went back to the old exciting scenes again, I might be weak enough to take up the old life once more. This dread was kept alive by some of the tools, which I had managed to keep, and which I kept locked away in my room for years. They were a strange attraction to me. But the fear was ungrounded; when I saw the old scenes again, I found that the love for the evil life had left me forever. Now you know the reason why I have turned detective and have tracked you. You cut off a life that was worth a million such as yours, a life more dear to me than my own."

Leaning back, he went on in his quiet, inflexible voice: "I do not want to redden my hands with your blood, but if you attempt to escape I will shoot you like a dog. The law wants you and you shall be tried by it."

He drew out his watch with his left hand, glanced quickly at it and said: "It is past midnight. As soon as the dawn breaks we will go to the station and take the train to New York. You already know what an attempt to escape will result in."

The murderer made no response, but sinking back in his chair gnawed his nails till the blood almost came; but all in vain, he could form no plan of escape. Once his captor saw him glance at the lamp and he drew it over to him.

Only the deep breathing of the two men was heard as the minutes stole slowly but surely by. Just as the dawn was breaking the captive turned his glowing eyes towards the patternmaker, and his lips

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opened as though to make a last appeal, but no sound came from them—the determined look on his captor's face was more marked than ever.

It was just half past four when the patternmaker, revolver still in hand, rose and told his captive to put on his things. The fellow glanced around for a few moments, as a rat would for a hole, and then obeyed the command.

"Now leave the house first. I will keep four feet behind you. If I tell you to stop at any time, be sure and do so."

A few minutes later two men might have been seen walking, in Indian fashion, along the narrow overgrown path which connected the old house with the country road that led to the station. The same men, two hours later, stepped from a train in New York. Again the peculiar walk began—the tall man with the evil-looking face keeping four or five feet ahead of the smaller man, who held one hand even with his hip, and pointing slightly in front of him. The hand, which looked strangely large and out of proportion, was covered with a handkerchief. They were both going in the direction of the central police station.

Before they had gone two blocks from the depot, a policeman was seen across the street, and the man in the rear beckoned to him. As the officer obeyed the summons, the tall man made an involuntary motion as though he was about to break into a run, but the low warning sound from behind brought him to a standstill.

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Scarcely had the man in the rear spoken to the officer than he sprang suddenly forward, peered into the tall man's face, uttered an exclamation of astonishment and then deftly imprisoned the man's hands in a pair of handcuffs. The journey toward the police station was now continued almost on a run.

Just as the trio were about to turn into the central station a strange thing happened: the small man in the rear suddenly turned and disappeared. As he hurried away he muttered: "They will need no witness to convict him."

He was advertised for for days afterwards and asked to come and claim the two thousand dollars' reward that was his, but he could not be found.

The roomers at the quaint boarding house, No. 222 Dufresne Street, in ancient Quebec, are much the same as when Sam Lewis the patternmaker entered the house so hurriedly three months before and asked if there was a letter for him. It is about nine o'clock, and five or six are assembled in Lewis' old room. Lewis is one of the number again.

One of the men is reading aloud from a small daily paper and all are listening intently, Lewis apparently as much interested as the rest. He is respected and liked even more than of yore. The piece that is being laboriously read is headed: "The Mystery of an Unclaimed Reward." It reads more like fiction than truth, and recounts how a murderer, whom the detectives could not find, had been delivered up to justice by a strange man who had never appeared

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afterwards to claim the reward offered for the outlaw's arrest. It explained, too, how the murderer had pretended, when the stranger could not be found, that he had delivered himself up to an officer, not being guilty of the crime charged against him, and in that manner had tried to influence the jury in his favor. His statements about not having been in the company of a strange man, who had been seen to act as though guarding him, were refuted by station officials, who swore that they saw the accused both get on and off a train with this mysterious stranger. The accused was found guilty and condemned to death. The two thousand dollars were still waiting to be claimed. Thus closed the review of this mysterious case.

When the reader laid down the paper, the men hazarded surmises about the case. More than one of them waggishly wished that they could go and claim the reward.

Finally one of them turned to Lewis, who had taken no part in the conversation, and who was smoking quietly, and said: "Well, I guess the chances are that the reward never will be claimed now; what do you think, Lewis?"

"I guess," he replied, slowly, as he took the pipe from his mouth, and looked towards the window, "that the mystery as to who the stranger was will never be solved, and that consequently the reward will never be claimed." And he was a true prophet, for the stranger's identity is unknown even to this day, and the reward is still waiting a claimant.

LE RÉVEILLON



Le Réveillon

(Founded on a quaint French-Canadian custom still in vogue among the habitants of the Province of Quebec.)

WITH folded arms and head bent low Dominique Fabre sat looking, in a fascinated way, at the old box woodstove. From an ancient crevice in its side flashed out alluring gleams of light. But the rapt expression on the face of the gazer was not caused by the coquettish flames; his thoughts were hurrying back away through the years of the past to the night now ten years' distant. It was the anniversary of that night once more. Ten years ago! He had been but twenty-five then. A sigh escaped him—Ah, had he but then possessed the wisdom which bitter experience had now given!

The thinker moved restlessly, and as he did so a bar of light from the stove fell athwart his face, clearly revealing its intense longing. So deep was his abstraction that he did not hear a door open at the far end of the kitchen, nor see the figure it disclosed. It was that of a woman about middle life. A look of compassion came into her face as she stood for a moment and noted the sadness on the profile before her upon which the light still fitfully played.

Stealing softly up behind his chair she gently laid both hands on his broad shoulders.

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"That is you, Aunt Marie?" he asked meditatively, without moving.

"Yes, it is I, Dominique."

For a space there was a silence between them, and he was just about to rise when she said in a low voice: "You are thinking of her again, Dominique—of Alice?"

His answer came slowly and wistfully: "Yes, Auntie—thinking of Alice. It is Christmas Eve again, and it is hard to keep one's promise—to try to forget—when the anniversary comes round. It is just ten years ago to-night since it happened."

"But, Dominique, how hopeless your longing is." There was a little break in her voice, and the mouth, with its kindly lines, quivered.

Her sympathy touched him, and springing to his feet in boisterous fashion he broke out, in a tone which bespoke not a care in the world: "There, Aunt Marie, we are not going to spoil our Christmas Eve by thinking over things which make us sad."

Groping his way toward the table, he went on, in the same jaunty way: "Just wait till I light the lamp, and then things will be cheerful straight off. There is nothing like light to—"

But here his aunt's voice interrupted: "Do not light the lamp, Dominique; raise the blind and look out into the night."

He did as she asked and, as the blind shot up, an exclamation fell from his lips—the moon, high up in the heavens, shone directly into the window, lighting up the room as clear as day.

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"Yes, the night is very beautiful, Dominique," she said, answering his exclamation. She was standing by his side again, and now they both stood in silence, taking in the glory without. Away in the distance, across the fields of snow and in the intense frost, gleamed the tin-clad tower of the Church of St. Pascal, scintillating in the pure light like burnished silver.

"And ten years ago to-night it was exactly such a night as this, too." His mind was on the past again, and the words were almost a whisper.

At this moment the chiming of bells stole sweetly into the room, and his mood suddenly changed again: "Ah," he said brightly, "the bells of St. Pascal. It is half-past ten; just half an hour before midnight mass. I will put the horse in the sleigh at once; there is no time to lose." He bustled into his greatcoat, pulled his fur cap well down over his ears, and cheerily calling out to his aunt to hurry and put on her wraps, strode out of the kitchen.

She watched him from the window plough his way through the deep snow toward the stable. His efforts at cheerfulness—how transparent they were! The pathos of his life appealed to her so keenly that there came to her eyes that which blotted out the moonlight. When his form had vanished she turned sadly from the kitchen, and went to her own room to dress for the drive.

In less than ten minutes Dominique was back again, his face ruddy with the frost. He called out loudly that he was ready.

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As he stood patiently waiting in the middle of the quaint room he made a goodly specimen of the French-Canadian habitant. His tall, hardy frame spoke eloquently of strength and endurance—invaluable heritages from ancestors who made farming lands out of the forests of the New World. His tanned face, open and manly, was somewhat marred, however, by a tinge of despondency.

His patience was just beginning to ebb when his aunt, with eyes peculiarly bright, entered.

He glanced up as he was about to turn to the door and, to his astonishment, saw that, after all his waiting, she had not prepared for the drive.

Answering his look of surprise she said, in a slow, curious way: "The truth is, Dominique, I—I have changed my mind, and will not go to mass."

"Not going, Auntie?" he queried, wonderingly.

"No, Dominique," she said in a flurried way. "I think I had better not go. The *réveillon* is to be held here to-night, after mass, and I am afraid I have not quite got everything prepared after all. At least a dozen of the neighbors will come back with you after mass. Then the *tourquiere* (pie) will take at least two hours to warm through; it would be a dreadful thing to have it spoiled."

He looked at her ponderingly—somehow there was that about her which greatly mystified him. Presently he said, in his even way: "Very well, Auntie; you know best just what you have to do."

She watched him jump into the sleigh, and heard him call to her, as he was driving off, that he would

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be back with the neighbors after mass. Then, shutting the door, she sped with joyous face to her room, where she stayed until mass must have been fully half over; and this in spite of all she had said about the pie which needed so very long to heat and of the divers preparations that were yet to be completed for the *réveillon*.

The night, so gloriously clear, was intensely cold, and after leaving the house Dominique drove rapidly. Soon he reached the main road, and here a sight typical of the Province of Quebec in the country districts on Christmas Eve met his eyes. As far as could be seen was a host of sleighs taking worshippers to midnight mass to do homage to the One who nineteen hundred years ago came to earth to preach good-will to men.

The tinkling of numerous sleighbells mingling with the thud of horses' feet and the sound of joyous voices lessened the sense of strangeness and the loneliness of the hour, and awoke a sense of glad anticipation.

The cheeriness of the scene had a soothing influence upon Dominique, and soon he was calling to one acquaintance and then another as he passed swiftly along the road.

But in the hush and impressiveness of the church his light-heartedness vanished, and soon the old heartache, which was always so keen on this night, had the mastery once more. His thoughts were with

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the past again. He was thinking how different his life had been from what, ten years ago, after such a mass, he had planned it should be.

"Behold I bring you glad tidings!"

The midnight hour had passed. The choir had risen and was singing out the grand words to which mankind so gladly listens.

And as the message fell upon Dominique's ears a feeling of rest at last stole over him. Like nearly all French-Canadians he was a faithful son of the Church, and its consolations were precious.

"Glad tidings! Glad tidings!" The refrain kept ringing in his ears long after the choir had ceased singing. From the religious import of the words he presently began to recall how he had longed and hoped for glad tidings of one who was lost to him. What a glorious Christmas it would be if such a miracle could happen and glad tidings should come of her!

"Glad tidings! Glad tidings!" How persistently haunting the words were.

As the worshippers crowded from the church the murmur of voices, uttering Christmas greetings, filled the air. The moon still shone out gloriously, making glad the new-born day, and throwing a happy light on the devout faces of the habitants.

With the peaceful mood still upon him Dominique was now driving homeward. Following close behind were several sleighs filled with those who had been invited to celebrate the *réveillon* with his aunt and himself at the close of the mass.

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Some ten minutes before mass concluded Aunt Marie sped, in much confusion, from her room to the kitchen. Her eyes fairly danced with suppressed excitement. In a twinkling she had the great meat pie in the oven. Soon the long deal table was daintily set, while the huge box woodstove, grateful for the reception of several hardwood knots within its ravenous interior, was sending out a warmth of welcome that was sure to have generous recognition from the guests after their cold drive.

At intervals the humble place was made still more homelike by Marie singing the sweet French-Canadian Christmas hymn:

Minuit, chrétiens, c'est l'heure solennelle
Ou l'enfant Dieu descendit parmi nous,
Pour effacer la tache originelle,
Et de son Père arreter le courroux,
Le monde entier tresaille d'allégresse,
En cette nuit qui nous donne un Sauveur,
Peuple à genoux attends ta délivrance.
Noel! Noel! Voici le Redempteur!
Noel! Noel! Voici le Redempteur!

Scarcely had the last words fallen from her lips when the kitchen door was thrown open and Dominique, with a dozen old neighbors, burst into the room. Wraps were quickly thrown aside and soon hands were being warmed over the stove and compliments paid to Aunt Marie for being so good a stoker.

After a general warm-up the men left to attend to the horses. By the time they returned the pie was in the centre of the table. Heaped all along the table,

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too, were mounds of wholesome Canadian brown bread, while newly churned butter (a special treat for the occasion) stood on small delft plates.

Finally the party was seated, and then Dominique, in the serious way he did everything, began serving the pie—a pie most wonderfully and fearfully made, containing, as it did, a compound of pork, beef, chicken, onions, potatoes and divers other toothsome things.

While Dominique served, the guests chatted with right goodwill among themselves, now and again having a joke to crack with Dominique, who, by the way, was covertly giving much attention to Aunt Marie, as she had twice upset the pepper box and shown other symptoms of excitement that were most unusual in one so placid. From her brightness and happy laughter, however, came the comforting reflection that her excitement was not due to anything that foreshadowed sorrow. Nevertheless, as Dominique filled the empty plates with great heaps of pie he continued to gaze wonderingly at her.

The meal was a delightful one in every way, and finally the table was almost cleared of the good things it had borne; then, after the bottles had been opened and the glasses filled, came the most quaint and characteristic feature of the *réveillon*—that of gathering about the cozy stove, recalling blessings that had been enjoyed during the year and speaking of friends of long ago.

The guests were nearly all French, but there were a few English-speaking farmers among them; and as

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some of the latter did not speak French the habitants, with a courtesy proverbial of them, spoke in English—English very quaint and broken, it is true, but very sweet from their tongues nevertheless.

As Dominique sat silently smoking and thinking of one dear friend of the past, a sigh broke from his lips. Aunt Marie sat covertly watching him, a great longing possessing her to tell him a secret which was sorely hard to keep. But she must keep silent a little longer, for the time had not yet arrived. She told herself that after Baptiste Larochelle had spoken (he was preparing to do so) then that which would change the whole tenor of Dominique's life should be made known to him.

Baptiste Larochelle, who had now begun to speak, was one of the oldest habitants in the parish, having reached the age of four-score years. He was a quaint, curious character, full of good humor and the enjoyment of life; in brief, a wholesome, rugged old man, whom the weight of years instead of souring had sweetened.

After carefully charging his pipe with tabac Canadien, so famous for its lusty odor, he had leaned back in his chair, and then, in philosophical way, began in broken English:

"Yes, sure, de passing year bring plenty change for de old and de young wit'out favor. In dis pass year some make money and some lose it, some make friend and some lose dose dey have, some get married, but odders not get married at all (here he looked at Dominique); and so de ole worl' go roun' jus' de

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same. Dat ole proverb she is true, sure, which say dere is no use to cry for de milk when she's fall on de floor. De bes' way for pass your life is wit' smile on your face all de time.

"As for myself, de year dat will soon be gone has leave me notting for complain. It is true I loss two barn dat burn wit' de fire. Den de nex' t'ing I loss my bes' hoss; as you know, he's break his neck by putting it too far down in de well—his body fall on it when he upset hisself.

"But, den, dese are only leetle t'ings. W'at I remember de mos' is dat I, like de odder farmers, have fine crop dis year. But what is de bes' t'ing for ole man like me to t'ank de bon Dieu for is dat I am on top of de groun' an' not under it; an' dat de great pleasure is mine to be at yet annoder *réveillon* like dis an' meet all de frien' I know."

As he concluded, he again stole a look at Dominique, for whom he had ever a warm liking. Years ago Dominique had been one of the most light-hearted of young men; but a change had suddenly come over him, the reason of which none had ever known.

During the pleasing ceremony which ensued after Baptiste ceased—that of replenishing the glasses—Dominique slipped out of the room and, going to the parlor, with its modest fittings, stood looking out at the night. He was thinking of old Baptiste's philosophy. Somehow he felt that no philosophy in the world could charm away his heartache.

He had not been alone many minutes when he felt

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a hand upon his shoulder. Turning, he saw it was Aunt Marie.

"How you love the solitude, Dominique," she said, gently.

He stroked her hair, but made no reply; he knew she read his heart and understood his frequent craving for solitude.

For a little time they were silent, and then she said, in a hesitating, strange way: "Christmas morn has come again, Dominique—the day of glad tidings to the world."

"Glad tidings! Glad tidings!" Once more the words began singing themselves in his ears, creating a feeling of unrest he could not explain.

Seeing that the pondering look on his face had but deepened at her words, she moved restlessly and went on: "The *réveillons* only bring you unhappy memories now, Dominique."

"There, Auntie, we won't talk about it, I—"

"And to think," she interrupted, as he paused, "that it was ten years ago to-night, almost at this very hour, that you quarrelled and parted from her, Dominique."

"Yes, almost at this very hour ten years ago," he answered. His effort at brightness had gone again, and there was pain in his voice.

"I seem to see her again, Dominique. How pretty and full of life she was that night, and—"

"How vividly you recall her, Auntie—don't!"

She knew she was paining him, but she must not cease.

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"And when she left for the United States, after the quarrel, how strange it was that you should never have heard from her, Dominique."

There was a long pause before the answer came, but at last he said: "She must have ceased to care; I wrote, but she never answered—there were no glad tidings for me."

"But glad tidings may yet come, dear." She could scarcely control her voice; her heart was beating furiously.

"Tidings of her will never come now, Auntie; too many years have gone."

So deep was the wistfulness in his voice that tears came to her eyes. She could continue no further with what was in her mind. He felt her hand slip from his shoulder and heard her whisper: "I will go to the guests now, but wait a few moments and I will return."

The moon was sinking low, and behind Dominique the room was full of shadows. Had his mind not been so engrossed he might have heard the soft rustle of a dress. The sound came from one of the corners where the gloom was the deepest.

Out of the darkness a shadow stole softly and hesitatingly towards him. A tremulous little hand reached out and gently touched his shoulder.

Thinking his aunt had returned he did not move.

"Dominique, I—I bring you glad tidings." The words scarcely reached him, they were so low and faltering.

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But had they been sounded in trumpet tones he could not have started back with more suddenness.

"Alice!" he exclaimed. "Alice!"

She moved a step nearer, and then the last rays of the moon lit up her face—a face matured now, and even more beautiful than in young girlhood.

"I have come back to the *réveillon*, Dominique—after ten years." Her voice quivered, but her eyes were glowing with expectant happiness.

"And back to me, Alice?" Oh, the eagerness in his voice!

"If you still think me worthy, Dominique. But I fear—"

He waited to hear no more; his eager arms stretched out and enfolded her.

After a time, in his deep happiness, he turned, and looking out of the window, said in low, happy voice: "At last—glad tidings—glad tidings. Thank God!"

The door opened and Aunt Marie fairly ran to them. She kissed them both with a passion as though the great happiness were her own. "You must come back with me now," she whispered; "the guests will soon be going."

With the impulsiveness of children they had started towards the door, when Dominique suddenly halted and said: "But I do not understand, Auntie, how this wonderful thing has come to pass; I must have some explanation before I can face them, you know."

But all the satisfaction he got was the laughing reply from the good old soul that the *réveillon* was

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not yet over—and *réveillons* were just the place to explain things that made people happy.

Without giving him another moment's grace, Aunt Marie threw the door wide open, and there they all stood revealed to the guests. Taking Alice—the new guest—by the hand, Aunt Marie walked up to the company and said: "Most of you, I have no doubt, will remember Mademoiselle Alice Painchaud—now Dominique's fiancée."

And most of the guests did remember her sweet face, although it had been ten years since they had looked upon it. Then the handshaking and congratulations which besieged the newly-engaged couple was such that their faces took on a hue which the glowing stove was in no way responsible for.

As for ancient Baptiste Larochelle, he simply bubbled over with philosophy and good-will; while the frequency with which he returned to shake hands with Dominique caused no end of merriment.

There was no thought of breaking up the *réveillon* for a little while now. Gathering around the stove again the company waited with eager expectancy for explanations of what was also to them now a mystery.

In the silence which ensued all eyes were turned on Dominique, who was not displaying any symptoms of calmness.

After lame attempts to say something he lapsed into silence altogether. Turning he looked in the most mystified manner, now at his aunt and anon at his fiancée. The latter's eyes were just dancing with merriment at the sadly puzzled picture he made.

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"Dat epich long time comin', frien' Dominique," exclaimed Baptiste, smilingly.

Thus cornered, Dominique folded his arms across his great chest and began in a low voice: "This night ten years ago Mademoiselle Painchaud and I quarrelled—quarrelled in the little parlor we have just left. It was a strange thing to fall out at a *réveillon*, where only good-will is supposed to be; it was sure to bring ill-fortune. But we were both young, and did not think. After the quarrel I did not go to see her for two weeks; then my heart ached so that I could stay away no longer. But I—I had nursed my pride too long. When I called I found she had gone to friends in the United States. I wrote (here the speaker partially turned and glanced at his fiancée), "but no answer came. She had lived years in the States before. I was only a simple habitant, and so I thought—"

"Dominique!" It was his fiancée's voice, and there was reproach in it.

The speaker covertly found her hand and went on: "After the first letter I did not write again. The years passed one by one, and all hope went out. But to-night I found her. She seemed to come out of the moonlight. I am as ignorant as to how it all has happened as any of you." He paused, looking whimsically at his aunt, and then concluded tenderly: "I think Aunt Marie has the other part of the story."

In his earnest way he had told his story very simply, and it had been listened to with rapt attention.

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And now all eyes were turned on Aunt Marie, who, with a smile playing over her faded, dear face, began abruptly: "I think the surprise I got was even greater than that of Dominique's. It came just before the time for midnight mass. I had been sitting talking with Dominique about the past" (here she turned and looked meaningly at Dominique), "and trying to banish the sadness which this anniversary always brought to him, when we discovered the hour was very late and that we must hurry if we would not be late for the mass. Dominique hastened to get the sleigh ready, while I went to my room to dress. I nearly fainted when I reached it. Standing before me was she of whom we had been speaking. It was moonlight, and I was sure it was a ghost. I believe I was trying to scream when she put her arms around me—they were warm and loving; and then I knew it was the living and not the dead I saw.

"She had just begun to explain how she had come back when I heard Dominique's footsteps in the kitchen again. In a moment we had decided not to let him know till after grand mass. When he saw I was not dressed and ready to go he looked so surprised I could scarcely keep from laughing. Oh, it was so hard not to tell him right off. But he went away after I had told him I had better remain and complete my arrangements for the *réveillon*.

"When he had gone I ran to my room, and then we planned the surprise that was to happen."

Mimicking Dominique, he now looked at Miss

LE REVEILLON

Alice and continued, whimsically: "I think you, Mademoiselle, have the final part of the story."

If the guests had been interested before they were doubly so now, and the eagerness with which they turned to the guest, so prominently singled out, gave her a most delightful color.

With her dark eyes fastened on the floor she began in a tender, womanly way: "It was I who was to blame for the quarrel. I—I had been flirting a little, I am afraid, before the *réveillon*—this night ten years ago—and so I deserved the angry things Dominique said. When I went away after the quarrel I felt sure he would come to see me in the morning; but days went by and I never saw him. I thought his love could not have been true, after all, and then I felt humiliated, and returned to live with friends in the United States. Two days after my return to them they moved to another part of the country. I went with them; so I never got the letter which Dominique wrote, and which I wanted so badly. Every Christmas Eve I used to think of the dear Canadian *réveillons*. I thought at first that time would make me forget, but it did not; I only remembered the more. So, two days ago, I determined to come back again. I arrived in the village this afternoon. When night came, and I felt sure Dominique must have gone to mass, I came to see Aunt Marie; something told me she would be here. The front door was open, and I had just reached her room when she entered. She really thought I was a ghost, and was so frightened, but she soon understood. And after—after

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she had told me something I was most anxious to know about Dominique, we then put our heads together and plotted this surprise.

"I was hidden in the little parlor there when Dominique stole away to it a few minutes ago. After Aunt Marie had left him I came out of my hiding-place, not out of the moonlight, as he thought."

She hesitated now, and with the rich color still mantling her cheeks at the explanation which she had been compelled to give, concluded, as she cast a fleeting look at Dominique: "So—well, that is all."

For a space there was complete silence. Then the spell was broken and the hand-shaking and renewed congratulations which again ensued were something delightful to witness. As for good old Baptiste his simple heart was so affected that he dared not trust his voice for even one philosophical saying.

There was cheery haste now to get wraps, and finally, after the season's compliments had been exchanged all round once more, the guests departed—the sound of sleighbells dying slowly away in the distance.

Far into the morning Dominique sat quietly smoking in the old kitchen, and watching the grey dawn creep up. His heart was full of song. What a *réveillon* it had been! So long as life lasted he would remember it.

"Glad tidings! Glad tidings!" The words again suddenly rang in his ears. And now, in the fulness and gratitude of his heart, he bowed his head in the quiet of the morn and breathed thanks to the Giver of All Good.

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FROM OUT OF THE NIGHT

From Out of the Night

(A Legend of the Lower St. Lawrence.)

SUDDENLY and weirdly from across the black wastes of mutinous waters, there fell upon my astonished ears as I sat quietly by the railing of the vessel in the rapidly gathering night, the mournful wail of a child. The cry had come with a sudden gust of wind and was heard but for a moment.

The inexplicable is ever prone to make us apprehensive, and it was with something akin to superstitious dread that I involuntarily bent further over the vessel's side, and with tense nerves waited to hear if the cry would be repeated—surely my ears must have deceived me! But they had not; again, distinctly, if somewhat more faintly, above the noise of a fresh burst of wind, and above the conflict of waters, came once more a child's cry—and such a cry, full of the most heartbreaking pathos and wistfulness.

I sat like one spellbound and asked myself if it could be possible that at that moment I was in the gulf of the stormy St. Lawrence, the nearest shore lying many miles away.

Had my health been stronger I might not have been so much unnerved. I had come, a few days ago, from one of the teeming American cities, at a low ebb of health, to the quaint little French-Canadian

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village of Gaspé, with its fisher-folk and health-giving sea breezes, to recuperate. I was now returning to the village on a powerful little vessel from a short trip taken that morning, further down into the gulf.

As stated, the vessel was yet miles away from land when I was startled by the inexplicable wails. On the boat, beside me, there were but four sailors and the skipper.

Scarcely had the cry been repeated than I started to my feet, and as I did so, my eyes fell upon two seamen who had evidently just come up from below. They, too, must have heard the cry, for, turning in the direction from whence the sounds had come, I saw them make the sign of the cross upon their breasts and heard them mutter, "*Pauvre enfant, pauvre enfant!*" With concerned faces they then turned to their duties, paying no more attention to me.

Crossing the narrow deck of the vessel, I returned to the brightly-lit little cabin, where I found the skipper, a typical French-Canadian, fearing neither wind nor wave, loud of speech, generous of heart; but, like most of his class, a firm believer in signs and omens.

He must have seen as I sat down that I was perturbed, for he poured out some liquor and handed it to me. After I had taken it, he told me in his quaint broken English that I should not have stayed out on the deck so long, seeing I was an invalid; he feared I had taken cold.

I answered that I had not been cold while on deck, but had been startled, and I feared a little unnerved,

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by a strange thing that had happened: in the freshening wind I had distinctly heard the wailing voice of a child.

In a moment his weather-beaten face took on a sobered expression; he, too, made the sign of the cross and whispered the words, "*Pauvre enfant!*" Noting my curious look, he quietly sat down and unfolded to me a story that for over two centuries has been believed in by the fisher-folk for hundreds of miles around Gaspé—and which is believed in by them to this day.

I shall not narrate the story as he told it; but going back through the centuries, the reader shall see with me the dramatic happenings which, legend says, causes the heartrending childish cries that are yet heard in certain weather off the coast of Gaspé in the Gulf of the St. Lawrence.

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The year was 1680. It had been unusual weather for the coast of Gaspé; although very late in the fall there had been a calm for ten days, and such a period of rest from storm, in this part of the country, was unusual even in midsummer. The vast expanse of water in front of the thinly populated village, which merged further down the gulf into the Atlantic, had been peaceful so long that the fisher-folk shook their heads and prophesied calamities ere long.

In the twilight of the tenth day of the calm, Father Larocque, the parish priest, who had but arrived in the district a week before, sat in a bare little room,

FROM OUT OF THE NIGHT

behind the altar of the church, which he had fitted up as a kind of study, his chin resting on his hand, his eyes, a sombre look in them, fastened on the uncarpeted floor. Youthful as was his countenance, it was strangely lacking in the expressions of hope and brightness so attractive in youth. What marred the face was the too dogged chin and restless expression of the eyes—eyes, nevertheless, whose changeful color betrayed, in spite of the harsh chin, the tense, highly-strung nature. Still, the face was not a strong one, as was shown by the forehead; it was too low, and harmonized but ill with the massive lower features. The whole mould of the countenance, in brief, bespoke a nature of conflicting passions difficult of government.

The deepening twilight had almost merged into the more sombre shadow of night when a hasty knock sounded on the study door. Rising slowly, Father Larocque lit a lamp and then opened the door; a fisherman's wife stood before him, and before he could enquire her errand she agitatedly told him an infant had been born, a little time since, to Madame Larivière, and that it was at death's door and had not had baptism.

Believing, as the habitants did, that there was no hope of salvation for an unbaptized infant, the keen agitation and fear of the woman was explained.

As she had uttered the name of Larivière, Father Larocque had started; but the start was followed by a sceptical, impatient expression, and, after asking the woman where the sick woman lived (as stated,

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he had but newly arrived), he dismissed her. Going back into the study he hastily donned his hat, and was soon striding in the direction of the cottage, which stood high up on the bank of the River Madeleine, close to where its waters emptied into the restless billows of the gulf.

Before he had walked very far he noted that a decided change had come into the night; the wind, which since his arrival in the country, had been so dormant, was slowly rising, and was scudding over the quarter-face of the moon clouds ominous with rain. The heavier wash of the waters of the gulf, on his left, bespoke their unrest at the approaching change.

The cottages, in this the infancy of the settlement, were comparatively few, and Father Larocque found the one described to him without difficulty. Opening the door of the cottage without knocking, he entered. In the small kitchen into which the door opened he saw, awaiting his arrival, the midwife of the district. An anxious look was on her face, and she said rapidly, as she pointed to a door: "You are just in time, Père; it cannot live many minutes now. Marie be praised, you have come in time; its little soul will not be forever lost now!"

He uttered no comment, and entered the sick room. His office being a sacred one, the midwife did not follow.

The light in the sick room was burning low, and it was only very dimly that the young priest saw, wrapped in a bundle of blankets by the side of a

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woman on the bed, an atom of humanity, its face speaking of the hovering of its spirit at the portals of the great unseen. The mother's face was turned from him.

Just at the moment he stooped to take up the babe and give it the last rites that were believed to mean eternal happiness for it—or without them the loss of salvation—the sick woman became aware of a presence, and turned her face towards him. Their eyes met. He stood like one petrified, his arms remaining outstretched towards the infant. From the woman's lips there fell a faint exclamation. It reached the midwife's ears in the kitchen, and she moved restlessly. For what seemed an age to her she heard no more, and then again a muffled sound of voices reached her, the voice of the priest sounding deep and strange, while in the voice of the sick woman there seemed a piteous tone of pleading.

Suddenly the door of the bedroom opened and the young priest, with set mouth and face exhibiting intense excitement, strode swiftly through the kitchen and opened the street door. Just as it was closing behind him a mournful, gasping wail from the sick-room fell upon his ears: the cry had come from the infant with the final flicker of life, and was the last it would ever utter.

The weird wail aroused the midwife from the stupor that had seemed to possess her, and she hastened into the bedroom; a sight met her eyes that she never forgot: the sick young mother was sitting up in bed, the dead infant clasped to her bosom, and

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she was crooning to it as though she herself were not desperately ill, and as though the little one had not already gone where her voice could never reach it.

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Paying no heed to the buffetings of the wind, which was still increasing in strength, Father Larocque, his face exhibiting the most conflicting emotions, continued his way over the barren, rocky road in the direction of the church, which was still some distance away; his steps, however, were not so determined, nor his air so resolute, as when he had left the cottage. In the man, despite that which had soured his nature, with its natural bent to gloominess and hasty, passionate acts, was an earnest craving for strength to live down self and relieve suffering—hence, haunting him now, and momentarily unnerving him, was the wailing cry of the infant that had reached him as he had left the cottage.

At last conscience triumphed, and when about half a mile from the church he abruptly turned and retraced his steps to the house.

Two hours later he was in his study once more, pacing to and fro in a way that only too plainly betrayed the deepest agony of mind. The great remorse now shown in his countenance had taken away its youthfulness so that years would have been thought to have elapsed since he had been summoned to hasten and save an infant soul from being forever lost by giving it the blessing of the church. The hours wore slowly on, and still backward and forward, and back-

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ward and forward, like some caged thing, he paced around the little study.

The wind which had been blowing with great violence from off the land towards the gulf, carrying great sheets of rain with it, began to veer rapidly and blow directly from the gulf, in a direct line almost from where the mouth of the River Madeline met it. Facing this direction was the one window in the study.

Presently the rain, answering the changed direction of the wind, smote suddenly against the window, while the voice of the shrieking wind, from its new quarter, filled the room. Had the storm caught upon its wings some direful anathema from the realms of the lost a more ghastly pallor could not have overspread the priest's face. In conscience-stricken terror he stood, with wide-open eyes, in the centre of the room gazing up at the window: distinctly to be heard in the storm and wind was the weird wailing of an infant's voice. The wail was woven in the very woof of the wind, wistful, hopeless and terrible of import. He stood and listened and listened till he could endure no longer; suddenly clasping his hands to his ears he whispered, his eyes gleaming with fear and distress: "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, the wail of the infant! Its lost spirit has been sent to punish me for my great sin." Sinking to his knees he tried to pray in the hope that the retributive cry might be hushed. In his great remorse he cried aloud, but the sound of his voice, ringing through the little room, seemed but to blend and accentuate the mournful wail of agony

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and bring it out still more clearly from the other sounds of the storm.

Fearful of going out into the storm to the little cottage where he lived near the church, he fled from the study, his hands again pressed to his ears, into the church—surely in the sacred edifice the cry of the lost soul could not find an entrance! In vain the hope; the church, with its many windows, was echoing the mood of the night tenfold more distinctly than was being repeated in the small study. Now echoing near the door, now being whispered from one window, then from another and anon wailing among the statues around the altar, was the mournful cry that he would have given the world to have commanded to cease. Lying on the steps of the altar he listened and listened as the hours went by in a remorse and agony so great as to be beyond the power of reason, at any great length, to endure.

The dim light, which ever burnt before the altar, slightly revealed and threw a ghostly light upon the prostrate, agonized figure.

The dawn still found him at the foot of the altar; the storm as before still blowing from the same direction and showing signs of increasing instead of diminishing fury. Still the hopeless voice whispered, moaned and wailed from dome, window and apse. Once or twice during the day, which was dark, almost as twilight, he raised his head, and looked in a wild, strange way towards the door of the church as though he would rise and flee; but each time it seemed to him

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that the wail was more unearthly and accentuated, and he buried his head in his arms again.

So the day wore on and the gloom of more direful night reached out shadowy arms into the church. In front of the altar still glimmered the feeble light. Soon the blackness was so dense that the rays scarcely revealed the sufferer. The storm had now turned to a furious gale. Shrieking up from the wild gulf, the wind tore around the exposed, lonely church, filling the interior with unnumbered echoes; yet never so loud the voice of the gale or multiplied its echoes as for a moment to overwhelm the moan of childish agony so subtly woven in it.

For almost two hours after midnight he continued in horror to listen, weak from the want of food, and benumbed by the cold, to the nemesis that he believed had been decreed of God, as it unceasingly wailed out from the pandemonium of other sounds. Finally, the limit of human endurance was reached, and, staggering to his feet, his face drawn beyond the power of words to paint, he ran stumbling from the church, out into the blackness of the revengeful storm, directing his steps towards the dense woods, which ran some little distance from the church, back far into the interior, ending the settlers at this early time scarcely knew where.

When noon came the fury of the storm had all but spent itself. The wind had veered again, and the mournful cry was heard no longer. Later in the day a garment belonging to the priest was found a short distance from the church, and when he could not be

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found in the cottage, in his study, or in the church, the settlement was aroused—some mysterious and tragic happening while the storm had raged in the night was now feared, and each heart was oppressed. Searchers that day could get no trace of the missing man, but late the following afternoon footprints, that were supposed to be the priest's, were followed to the edge of the wood. The disturbed undergrowth then gave the trail, and Father Larocque was found half lying, half crouching at the foot of a great tree, alm two miles from where he had entered the wood. Wet and emaciated, he was still alive. But when his rescuers looked into his eyes their rejoicing ceased—there was no ray of reason in them. They crossed themselves in mute, mystified pity.

When they reached the village with him another sorrow was in store for them—Madame Lariviere had died, and was to be buried by the side of her infant. She had left two other little ones to be cared for by them; for her husband was at sea. But what unnerved them the most was the strange and dreadful story told them as to what had caused her death. It was affirmed to be true by the midwife who had attended her. The story made them shrink away from the babbling priest, whose reason grew no stronger with the passing days; still he was sheltered till the clerical authorities were notified in distant Quebec, who removed him to a remote monastery there.

He lived in the silence of the place for months, his flesh failing and failing, till, so the legend is, he

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became a living skeleton. Reason came to him but once, and that was a few hours before his death; but in the brief space he remembered all, confessed and received the pardoning grace of the church for the wrong which no time could ever undo.

In that whispered confession was the foundation of the legend, which has existed for over two centuries and which is yet firmly believed in by the fisher-folk of Gaspé.

The dying man confessed to having entered the Church in Paris owing to a bitter disappointment in one he had loved several years before. She had been below him socially. On the very day they were to have been married she had jilted him, flying with a man of her own walk in life. The truth had been broken to him as he had waited for her in the church. Bitterness had finally turned to a longing for revenge; finally, in the hope of living down the misery of life, he entered the church as a novice and prepared himself for the life of a priest. For five years he had studied night and day, trying all the time by self-denying acts to find peace. At the end of the time he had been ordained and a few months ago had been sent, by the Bishop of Paris, to the little parish across the ocean at Gaspé. He had been glad to go to the far-distant place; in a new clime and with arduous work his hope had been that memory of her would cease. This hope, as all his hopes in life had seemed to be, had been futile. He confessed how, at the very moment when the fisherman's wife had come to him in his little study at Gaspé, asking him to hasten and

THE TRAITOR

christen a dying infant, he had been brooding of the one who had been so faithless to him.

When he had stood in the sick-room and the woman had turned her face to him at the moment he was reaching out his arms to take up the dying child, Satan had entered into his soul—it was the face of the woman he had loved that was looking into his! The tumult of evil which had possessed him had dried up all pity and he had refused, despite all the mother's pleadings, to baptize the infant and save its soul. In a fury of rage he had turned from the cottage. A gasping wail had smote his ears just as the door of the cottage was closing behind him.

Before he had reached the church, however, the horror of his act had come fully home to him, and turning he had almost run back to the cottage, praying all the way that he might not be too late to give the child baptism. But upon his return he had learned that the wail he had heard had been the last the child would ever utter.

Swift had been the retribution of God; from out of the sudden storm that had overspread the heavens had been repeated to him in that night of terror in the church, the hopeless wail of the babe; a wail, which he knew then, was from its lost soul as it strove in vain to find the rest which, by his sinful deed, it must seek for in vain.

Such was the confession, such the end of the priest, and such the woof of the story told me by the French-Canadian skipper—in the cabin of his little vessel—of the wailing infant cry which had reached me,

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miles out in the gulf, from the direction of the River Madeline.

For the satisfaction of those who are curious it may be said that geological research in the vicinity of the mouth of the Madeline has given a much less romantic explanation of the phenomenal childish moans heard far out in the gulf during certain weather. It has been demonstrated that on the mainland, where the River Madeline joins the waters of the gulf, are great and wondrous caverns, and that the monster waves, as they rush into and ebb from them, create the most pathetic childish wails, which when caught up by the wind and carried out into the gulf, or when wafted landward, are inexplicable and often awe-inspiring in the extreme.



THE CROSS ON THE PAY-SHEET



The Cross on the Pay-Sheet

At the age of twenty-five Jean Langlois' sole claim to education lay in his ability to make his cross on the weekly pay-sheet. Had he been given the most elementary education that which came into his life, and altered its whole tenor, would never have happened.

Jean's occupation was a lowly one—that of carrying bobbins in a cotton mill to the baskets of the women weavers. The monotonous task, with its narrow confines and still narrower future, depressed him as only a sensitive nature can know what depression is.

He could not remember the time when he had not longed to be instructed in the mysteries of education; but his environments held him inexorably, year after year, to the din of the clanging looms, the stifling air and sordid surroundings. With the passing of years the desire for a more intelligent sphere of life increased.

It was just after he had completed his twenty-fifth year that there came into his life an event of wondrous moment, banishing discontent, changing the din of the looms into actual music, and making the weaving-room the most desirable place in the wide universe. And all this great change was simply caused by the arrival of a new weaver, a saucy bit

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of a body, scarcely out of her teens and not nearly as high as his shoulder. The very moment his eyes fell upon her he thought nature had never created anything so beautiful and so appealing. It is little wonder Jean was attracted, for nature had been most kind indeed to the girl. Her oval, childish face was distinctly pretty, while a mass of shining brown hair fell far below her waist. Her eyes, a still deeper brown than her hair, were soft and glowing, and had that pronounced feminine expression that attracts chivalry and affection.

The custom in the mill was to pay the women weavers by the yard for the sheeting they wove, and to keep their looms constantly busy the big baskets by the side of the looms had to be kept filled. It was Jean's duty to replenish them with bobbins, which he carried from the spinning machines in an adjoining room.

The first marked change in Jean's behavior, coincident with the arrival of Alice, the new weaver, was that instead of going straight home when the factory bell proclaimed the day's work done, was the habit he got into of lingering at the gate till Alice came out, when she would smile saucily at him with a gleam in her merry eyes, and pass on.

Night after night she knew that a well-knit, muscular figure, over six feet in height and covered with fluffy down, followed her at a remote distance. She enjoyed his confusion so, one winter's night, when she suddenly halted and waited till he awkwardly reached her side. Looking up into his dark, quiet

THE CROSS ON THE PAY-SHEET

face, she broke out in astonished way: "What a peculiar way you have of going home, Jean Langlois!"

Jean, who was a French-Canadian and who spoke English in quaint, broken way, looked over her head from his great height, colored uneasily, picked from his coat patches of cotton, and finally said, in his strange patois: "I t'ink I take dis way home, Mademoiselle, because—" He halted ingloriously, for the gift of eloquence had never been his.

She stood with averted head, trying to hide her amusement, but presently a ripple of laughter fell from her lips, and she said, demurely: "As you live in the opposite way to me, Jean Langlois, I cannot help being curious about the matter."

He looked at the sky for a space as though for inspiration, and then began, haltingly: "I seem to like dis walk, Miss Alice, because—because it is de way you go home." The words were uttered with the utmost simplicity and an absolute absence of gallantry.

She looked up into his face with considerable surprise, but seeing only intense earnestness there, stood for a space at a loss what to say. Finally, with a marked touch of condescension in her tone, she informed him that, seeing he had come so far, he might as well see her straight to her own door. His eyes lit up with intense pleasure.

When he was leaving her at the door his happiness was still more intensified when she told him, with a somewhat grand air, that if he would act like

THE TRAITOR

a rational man, and go straight home at night after the factory closed, he might call some evening after tea and see her. Such was the beginning of Jean's visits.

All through that long Canadian winter Jean looked forward with anxiety to each recurring Thursday night. It was never too cold or inclement to keep him from her home.

She felt almost angry with him one evening for coming. It had been a most bitter day, and at night a fierce blizzard had set in, and the roads were well nigh impassable. But never a thought did Jean give to the buffeting storm, and he gazed at her in open-eyed surprise when she chided him for facing weather which she said was only fit for bears to roam in.

Ah, what a happy winter it was for Jean! So keen had been his anxiety to learn how to read and write that she had become his teacher, and never was there a more patient pupil. At times, when she laughed at him for some glaring error, he had the habit of looking at her, in his quiet, earnest way, with as much awe and reverence as a freshman would at the dean of a faculty. He thought her little head, with its beauteous covering, contained learning and erudition enough to warrant her occupying the very highest position the world could offer. He had wondered, times without number, how so marvellously gifted a person could ever be content with filling a weaver's humble position. Yet the truth was she had very little education herself—being able to read and write about summed up her qualifications. In

THE CROSS ON THE PAY-SHEET

her supreme egotism and inexperience, however, she never dreamed she was not fully entitled to the awe he entertained of her education or to the deep devotion he so boyishly betrayed.

Despite all her limitations and airs of superiority, she looked back, as spring drew nigh, with real pleasure to the winter evenings they had spent together. Scarcely knowing it, she had got into the habit of picturing to herself the pleasant trips they would take on Saturday afternoons—that precious half-holiday of factory people. It is hard to say; perhaps in time, had not some pregnant event been at hand, her feelings for him might have deepened into something like his real affection.

One warm day in April, as she was busily engaged at her loom, Jean halted at her side, with a huge basket of bobbins on his shoulder, and, looking down from his great height, told her, with a joyous ring in his voice, that he had just heard great news, and he wanted her to be the first to know it—the foreman had told him he was to given a much better position in another part of the factory.

She looked up into his glowing, strong face, and felt glad because of his happiness; yet scarcely had he reached the next loom than the incident left her mind. That whole day Jean, with springing steps, strode from one loom to another, building wondrous castles in the air—castles that were destined to fade, as they so frequently do with us all.

The new bobbin-carrier who succeeded Jean in the weaving-room—Richard Stone—became almost

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immediately a general favorite with the weavers. He was a light-hearted, curly-headed Englishman, with a smile for everyone. Then he was a clever clog dancer, and at noon hour he would give exhibitions of his skill to the women as they grouped around him in picturesque attitudes on the factory floor. From the very first he was attracted by the fair-haired weaver, and when, like the rest, she applauded, in recognition of his dancing, he looked intensely pleased and gratified.

In two weeks' time his friendship with Alice was such that he was a visitor at her home, and the sincerity of his welcome was not to be mistaken. In her most pleasing moods with Jean there had always been a touch of superiority and condescension; but with Richard this was missing.

Stalwart, honest Jean! How he suffered! At first he could not understand her strange constraint when he called, and why she so frequently did not seem to see him when they met at the mill gate. It was weeks before he learned of the eager attentions the new bobbin-carrier was paying her, and then for a while he ceased to call, and pain tugged remorselessly at his heart.

Midsummer came, and one glorious moonlight night Jean, feeling he could bear the pain no longer, hesitatingly wended his way in the direction of her home. He passed the door several times before he had the courage to knock. As she admitted him, with a little start of surprise, his great frame actually trembled with nervousness. She was very soon at

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ease and told him, with her old condescension, that he was quite a stranger. In turn, he strove hard to appear unconcerned, and talked in his broken English of things he hoped might interest her; but his words did not come readily, and once or twice he mixed up his words so strangely that she laughed quite heartily. He winced painfully, but she did not appear to know she was wounding him. Trying to explain his ignorance of her language he said sadly: "Me 'fraid, Miss Alice, dat I forget some of dose t'ings you teach me from de book las' winter."

"Oh, well, you know," she replied, quite lightly, "you will never be a great scholar, Jean."

"No, Miss Alice—no."

She rose as she spoke and, going to the window, looked eagerly down the street.

He saw the expression of expectancy on her face, and in an instant divined whom it was she was looking for. He was just in the act of rising, and telling her he thought he would go, when the door opened and Richard Stone entered. Forgetful of her visitor, she ran from the room into the passage and, taking Richard's hat, fluttered after him into the parlor.

"Ah, that you, Jean?" said Richard, pleasantly. "Not going yet, are you?" As he ceased he seated himself as one quite sure of his welcome.

"Yes, I t'ink I go now," answered Jean, looking with quiet dignity at Richard. In the presence of his successful rival his voice was firm and strong, and

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there was with him now no sense of inferiority. In his ruggedness he was a giant to Richard.

Alice did not accompany him to the door, merely bidding him good-night from where she stood near Richard. Just as the door was closing behind him a remark from Richard to Alice, which was not intended for his ears, stung him to the quick. "Is it not a pity," Richard was saying, "that such a fine-looking chap should only be able to make his cross on the pay-sheet?"

A thoughtless little laugh from Alice wounded Jean a thousand times more than Richard's words, and he strode into the night, his very heart bursting with anger and humiliation. He walked miles into the country battling with his pain and bitterness. Alice he could forgive, but try as he might he could not smother the fierce resentment he felt against his successful rival.

The following morning it happened that Alice and he met at the mill gate, and as he quietly stood aside for her to enter first, she handed him a soiled little English spelling-book. "I forgot to give you this last night," she said, quite brightly, and then passed on.

He took the book, making no reply. Her meaning was only too plain—it was his final dismissal!

He mounted the factory steps dazed and heavy, the pain at his heart well nigh unbearable.

At the meal hour that day he could not help, despite his suffering, pausing at the weaving-room as he passed and looking in. Richard was dancing,

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as usual. Alice formed one of the quaint circle grouped around him. Jean's lips tightened as he noted how proudly her eyes followed Richard's every movement.

As he was turning in distraught way from the door, a sunbeam chanced to light, through the narrow windows, on the fair hair he so dearly loved, and it shone with alluring beauty.

All that afternoon her face haunted him, and his sense of loss seemed too heavy to bear. But in his great affection there was no reproach in his heart for her; but when he thought of Richard a sense of injury came that no reasoning could put aside.

As the day dragged wearily on he glanced a score of times at the clock, and longed for the laggard factory bell to ring out the hour of six. When the hour at last came he seized his coat and was striding out, when it came to him that he might meet Alice and Richard at the gate. Retracing his steps, he waited for a time. When all was quiet he began to descend. As usual, he had to pass the weaving-room. He had intended to go straight out, but the old fascination was too great. Opening the door of the room, he entered. He went slowly to her loom and looked pathetically down at the empty basket he had so lovingly filled in the days that were gone.

In the quietness of the room there came back to him, one by one, all the pathetic air castles he had built, and how Richard's arrival had caused them all to vanish into utter nothingness. As he was turning away in his bitterness, the sound of someone

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moving fell upon his ears, and looking around he saw Richard, some little distance away, endeavoring to remove a belt from a pulley. Before Jean had entered Richard had been to the engineer and asked him to turn the engine a few revolutions, so he could throw off the belt and do some light repairs to the loom. It so happened that the loom Richard was working at was almost directly under the great main shaft which turned all the looms in the room.

As the machinery began slowly to move, and the monster shaft to descend, Richard, after throwing off the belt, thoughtlessly stepped back, as though pondering over the repairs to be made. This act placed him directly under the great descending shaft. His peril was clear to Jean in a moment, and his first impulse was to dart forward and rescue Richard from his perilous position. But quick upon the impulse came the memory of the life's misery that this man had brought to him. With clenched hands he stood waiting. Suddenly the picture of the fair hair, caressed by the sunbeam, flashed back to him, and the best that was in him triumphed. Springing forward, he grasped Richard, and with his great strength swung him from danger as easily as though he had been a child. Just a few seconds more delay and the shaft would have blotted out the life of the man who had come between him and what made life worth living.

With a startled cry Richard looked up into Jean's self-possessed face, and in uncomprehending way asked what was wrong.

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Jean, without replying, pointed at the ponderous shaft which was now rising from the very spot where his rival had stood.

Instantly Richard realized the mortal peril he had been in, and his face whitened.

"Should not stan' dare when fix loom," said Jean. There was no emotion in his tone.

In incoherent way Richard began to thank him; but Jean scarcely listened—once more he was engrossed with the memory of the burnished hair that the sun had so beautified. Turning abruptly he left the room.

When Jean reached home another ordeal awaited him. He lived alone with his mother, a simple-hearted old body, and as unlettered as was her boy. When the new and great happiness had come into his life, Jean had told her of his love of Alice and of his hopes, and she had rejoiced with him, as loving mothers will, no matter what their estate, till the end of time.

Of late, however, she had noted how the gladness had died out of his face, noted his listlessness and depression; and though he gave no explanation, she had heard from others of the way he had been jilted, and she longed to give him comfort.

Jean was even quieter than usual after the incident with Richard in the mill that night, and as he sat down to supper his sadly troubled face made it piteously hard for the little mother to fight back the insistent tears.

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He went to his room almost immediately after tea, and she sat listening and listening to his restless footsteps overhead till she could fight back her sympathy no longer.

As she slowly entered his room he turned to her in surprise, and said, in his considerate manner: "Up yet, mother? I thought you had gone to bed long ago."

As she looked into his face and saw the suffering there, her control gave way, and covering her eyes the tears trickled through the worn fingers.

Putting his arm about her and stroking the thin, white hair, he anxiously asked her to tell him what the trouble was. It never came to him that her grief was pity and tenderness for him.

At last, with infinite tact, she told him she knew of the death of the hope he had cherished of winning the one so dear to him.

The keen mother-sympathy suddenly swept away the control he had so long exercised, and he sank by the side of the bed, his shoulders heaving convulsively. With her arms about him, she strove to give him comfort, as she had done when he was a mite of a boy—and that seemed to her but yesterday!

Finally he rose, and they sat in silence for a time.

"Mother," he said at last.

"Yes, Jean?"

"You and I," he began, hesitatingly, "never had schooling, had we?"

She knew how he had always longed for an educa-

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tion, and answered, a little sadly: "Neither of us had ever any chance to be educated, Jean."

"I think," he said, pathetically, "if I had but been educated it might have been different; she might have—have—"

As he abruptly halted in order to gain control of his voice, she looked up into his face and her mouth quivered. "My poor Jean! My poor boy!" she broke out.

Her distress roused him from his unhappy musings, and with a change of mood he said, in the bright way she loved so much: "We won't talk any more about education, mother. Now, don't you think a talk about a little something to eat, even if it is late, would be more sensible? Somehow I am frightfully hungry." It was an artful move, and it was successful.

In a twinkling she was on her feet and they were *en route* to the kitchen, Jean chattering about his appetite in a way that made her old heart thrill.

It was remarkable in what short time Jean had the old wood stove roaring, and was kneeling before it with a pyramid of bread to toast.

As she bustled to and fro he presently held up a slice of smoking toast, and then gave utterance to a plan that had been in his mind for some time.

"Do you know, mother," he began easily, "I think I would like to go West and take you with me. Really, now, don't you think I am too big and strong to be smothered in a factory?"

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As she listened to his words a look of dismay passed over her averted face. She had been born in Montreal, the old French-Canadian city, and loved it despite all the poverty that had been her life's lot, and she wished to stay in it till the end. But knowing the reason that actuated him to go away, she answered in brave, cheery tones: "Why, Jean, how strange that we did not think of this before. It is just the place we should have gone to long ago." She looked so radiantly at him that he never for a moment dreamed of what her real feelings were.

"I am so glad you think as I do, and I would like to go soon—very soon."

"Certainly, we will go soon. I—I do not see why you should go back to the mill again." She was thinking simply of the wounded look that had been in his eyes for so many weeks, and knew it was far better for him to be in new surroundings, so he might forget.

"Then, mother, we will leave just as soon as we can pack up."

"Just as soon as we can pack, Jean."

Going to where she stood, he stooped and silently kissed her.

"My dear, dear boy," she said, brightly.

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"And you are quite sure that you love me, Alice?" Richard was speaking. They were seated in the little parlor where Jean had spent so many happy hours laboriously striving to learn how to spell and read.

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"Yes, Richard, sure, quite sure, I love you." Her face was radiant.

There was nothing in this wide world Jean would not have given could he have taught her to look at him as she was doing at the man she had chosen instead of him.

There was a momentary silence between the lovers, and then Alice said, lightly: "And to think that we owe it to Jean Langlois in saving your life, Richard."

"Yes, Alice, we owe him everything—more than we can ever repay. I think he is the finest man I ever knew."

"Yes, he is a good fellow, Richard; and what a pity it is that his education has been so neglected that he can only make his cross on the pay-sheet."

The lightness of her tone and words jarred upon him, and he answered, with a shade of reproach: "If I thought, Alice, I could ever grow to be as fine a man as Jean is, education or no education, it would be something to look forward to."

FLIER No. 4, WESTBOUND

Flier No. 4, Westbound

TWENTY years is a long time for a train despatcher to be in active service and to retain anything like a semblance of good nerves. It has been my lot to have served these goodly number of years; and, well, to-day, I must frankly say that my nerve is not what it should be for a man who is still in the forties. But as the reader is usually more interested in the narrative than in the narrator, hence to my story.

I was despatching at the time on the P. A. and—— Railway. My shift was from 10 p.m. till 4 a.m. Having business in the Union Depot one evening, where the despatchers' office was situated, I sauntered along the platform to look at a fine new engine which was to make her first run that night. As I ran my eye over her I could not suppress a feeling of pleasure. The hoarse breathing of the colossus echoed at intervals aloft among the station's network of iron girders, while its gorgon eye lit up the track ahead for fully a mile. The driving wheels, towering above me, created a distinct impression of the insignificance of human strength.

"Hello, Ralph; sizing her up?"

Glancing up, I saw big Joe Reynolds, the driver, stepping down from the cab.

"Yes, sizing her up, Joe; and she's a beauty."

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A proud look shone in his eyes as he reached my side. Laying a caressing hand on one of the drivers, he said fondly, "She is a great machine, Ralph, I can tell you."

"And so she gets her first outing to-night, Joe?"

"Her first real outing, yes; I handled her yesterday on a trial run, and from the way she behaved any engineer in the world would be proud of her." He was patting the great drivers now as a man would a well-bred animal.

"Well, let me warn you," I said, banteringly, "not to be banging that big toy of yours into anything to-night, for you will be hauling behind you a certain person who is to be the best half of me when she returns in a couple of weeks' time."

We had been friends for years, and, as he impulsively held out his hand, he said: "My dear boy, I wish you all the luck in the world. I promise you that she will be as safe back there in the cars as she would be at her own home. That is," he continued laughingly, "if you yourself do not wire me a wrong crossing order, away out there on the line, and bang me into something."

"I will certainly stick to that part of the bargain, Joe," I said.

With a thoughtless laugh he climbed back into the cab, and I hurried down the platform and into the Pullman where my affections were centred.

As I chatted with my fiancée for a few moments, she suddenly said, with a touch of girlish pride: "So, through all the long night, even though we are

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hundreds of miles away, you will be giving orders and directing the safety of everyone on this train?"

"Both on this train and others, too, dear."

To my surprise the expression of pride slowly died from her face and she said slowly: "Somehow, Ralph, it seems a dreadful responsibility. I—I am afraid I should not like to be a train despatcher."

In some unaccountable way her words caused a feeling of depression to creep over me. The sudden clang of the bell for the express to depart prevented further discussion, and, with a jest at her seriousness, I hurried from the train.

I am not a man given to moods; yet as I stood on the platform and watched the red light on the rear end of the train die out in the darkness, I fervently longed to have my fiancée safe at my side again.

But, as I presently sat down at my desk in the brightly-lighted despatchers' room, and listened to the tapping keys and answering sounders, whatever queer depression I might have felt quickly departed, for of all things concentration of thought is the one thing absolutely necessary to those in my vocation.

Running my eyes rapidly over the despatchers' sheet, I saw at a glance that I would likely have a busy night of it. Telegrams from various points on the road stated a heavy snowstorm had been raging, with the result that many of the trains were off their running time; this meant they could only run on special orders from the despatcher. A scribbled note, from the despatcher I had relieved, also informed me that in addition to there being a couple of specials

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on the line, there was a special stock train that must be rushed to her destination as quickly as possible, as an ocean steamer was waiting at the terminal point to convey the cattle across the ocean.

As the night wore on, and as I arranged crossing after crossing, I continued to receive reports of the fury of the storm which was still blowing over the wastes where the trains had to travel.

Such was the storm that by midnight there was not a single train on my entire section running on her schedule time. The wires were buzzing incessantly with orders. I had, however, up to midnight, managed to give westbound flier No. 4 a pretty clear line, not detaining her for crossings; and big Joe Reynolds had so fought stress and storm with his great engine that the train was but a few minutes behind time. But, at last, according to the sheet before me, I was face to face with the somewhat unusual problem of having to order the express to stop at a small way-station in order to allow a freight to have the right of line and cross her—the freight was none other than the east-bound stock special for which the steamer was waiting. To the uninitiated I may say that a fast express is rarely held for a crossing unless it be to cross a train of her own class.

Hastily scanning my sheet, and rapidly weighing the problems it exposed, I came to the prompt decision that the circumstances warranted me in detaining the express, and rushing the stock special so she would not lose the steamer.

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I saw that the next station the express would reach would be Gainesville. The station was so unimportant that the express was not scheduled to stop there; this meant red signal lights would have to be displayed at the station to detain her. This detaining order I intended to give. Once such lights are displayed at a station an engineer would as soon think of ignoring them as he would of rushing to his death.

For fully two minutes I called Gainesville without getting an answer. Despatchers know how peculiarly irritating this is. I was pretty sure it was the old story of a station agent at a small station, not expecting orders, and dozing.

My persistence finally roused him, and I got a sleepy response.

After giving him a few words of reprimand, I then clearly gave him the order to turn his signal lamps and hold west-bound flier No. 4 until the east-bound stock special crossed her *there*.

Obedying rules, he repeated word for word the order I had given him. It was done in a somewhat dragging, slovenly manner, and I made a mental note that I would have him on the carpet in a day or two for his sleepiness and inattention.

The next order in sequence was to call the station west of Gainesville, and give the station agent there an order to allow the east-bound stock to go ahead and cross the flier at Gainesville.

This order was given and satisfactorily repeated. As it would be some minutes before I would have another order to give, I leaned somewhat wearily back

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in my chair and listened to the furious wind as it shrieked past the office; anon my thoughts travelled away out into the storm to the one particular passenger housed in the express, in whom I was so deeply interested.

Glancing at the clock, I saw that four minutes had sped away. I realized it was time that the station west of Gainsville had called me up and notified me of the arrival of the stock special; she ought to have been there by this time.

I had just placed my fingers on the key, and was about to call the station, when the sounder before me ticked the call of my office.

Answering, I received a report of the exact time that the stock special, bound for the east, had left to cross the express at Gainsville. This was as I had ordered; but, according to calculations I had made, figured out on the time the express had been making, I was surprised that before this I had not been notified by Gainsville of the arrival of the express, which, of course, *was to be held*.

I now immediately called Gainsville to enquire if the express had arrived and was waiting, and to send him an order to allow her to proceed on her western journey as soon as the special reached there.

I was decidedly irritated when, once more, I repeatedly called Gainsville without getting any reply whatever.

While I was calling there came an occurrence that will never be dimmed from my memory; Gainsville answered my call, and then, without waiting to listen

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to the question I had to put to him concerning the arrival of the express, reported slowly and distinctly the following dreadful words: *Passenger No. 4, west-bound, passed at 12.17.*

For a moment I sat absolutely dumbfounded. He had reported the passenger train as having *passed* his station! What, then, of my order to him to hold the express till the down stock (which was now rushing over the single track to Gainesville) had made the crossing with the express? If he had wired me aright the two trains were rushing to meet on the single track and crash into each other.

The whole situation flashed through my mind with such rapidity that scarcely could the agent at Gainesville have taken his fingers from the key than he heard me calling his office again.

This time he answered immediately.

"What do you mean by a report like that?" I queried. "*Has the express arrived?*"

As I waited for the momentous reply, I could feel the perspiration gathering on my forehead.

"I reported her time when she *passed*," came the astounding reply.

"Good God, man, what about my order to *detain her?*" I could have cried aloud in my anguish.

For a brief space there was silence, and then came the shaking answer: "*I forgot the order. I did not turn the lamps. She has just run past! My God! what shall I do?*"

I rushed the answer to him in an instant: "Throw up the arm of the distant semaphore. There may yet

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be a chance to stop her!" It was the only hope left—yet it was a hope.

And now ensued a wait that seemed hours; yet it could not have been very many moments. Leaving the key open, which made the entire line unworkable, I could see him clearly, in my heated fancy, rushing from the station to the platform, releasing the wire of the semaphore arm half a mile distant; and then standing, wild-eyed and terror-stricken, under the tremendous hope that the engineer might not have passed the arm; that its sudden uplifting and exposing of the danger signal would attract attention and so stop the train's onward flight to the catastrophe ahead. Could human ingenuity conjure up a situation more piteous and trying? Mastering and overpowering me was the presentiment that his mission would be fruitless.

When the line awoke to life again after its brief silence, I knew, by the very touch of his fingers on the key, what was to come:

"It is too late," came the words; "she must have passed under the semaphore before I threw it up. I could not see her in the storm; but she has gone."

Of a truth the situation was now in the hands of Providence; it was beyond human control.

All that remained for me now to do was to order out a wrecking train, from a point beyond, and then to give Gainesville an order to send out the section men, on a hand-car behind the express, and bring me news of whatever had happened.

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Then occurred a wait that would have wrecked the nerves of the strongest men. To me the situation was unnerving in a peculiar manner. On the crowded express there was one whose safety was a thousand-fold more precious to me than my own. Then there was great-hearted Joe Reynolds whom I had parted from so pleasantly but a few hours before, and whose hand was on the throttle of the great engine in which he had so much pride and which he was rushing on to crash into that heavily-laden stock train. In my desperation there came the faint hope that the engineers might, perchance, see each other's headlights and stop in time to prevent a collision. But pitting itself against this hope was the furious storm. I knew only too well that in such swirling, blinding storms as these the headlight of a locomotive could only be seen a few yards ahead.

I switched the remainder of the line on to that of another despatcher, and then sat, in fascinated way, watching the fateful fingers of the clock as they crept direfully on and on. Every second was bringing the monsters of fire and steam closer together.

To know this and only to be able to sit and wait!

The ordeal of the Inquisition would have been mercy compared with it. When the time had expired, when I knew that whatever had been decreed must have happened, my nerve entirely left me, and I buried my face in my hands. But the breakdown was only a matter of seconds; for I knew that when news did come I must be cool and ready to act promptly.

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I called Gainsville every few moments now to ask if any news had arrived; but only to receive a palsied reply in the negative. Even in my bitterness against the agent for his woeful negligence, I could not but think of what must be the terror of the wait to *him*—the one alone responsible for whatever might happen.

It was exactly half an hour after the departure of the express that Gainsville ought to have held, when, in reply to one of my frequent queries for news, he answered, and said the section men had returned on the handcar.

"What do they report?" I waited for his answer with bated breath.

The words came so jumbled and shaking that I could scarcely read them.

"The—report—is—the—trains—collided. Three dead. None seriously injured."

"And the dead, who are they?" I asked. I was strangely quiet and self-possessed now.

"The dead are the engineers of both trains and one fireman."

As I thought of great Joe Reynolds crushed and mangled out there, the engine in which he had had so much manly pride a mass of scrapiron, there came that to my eyes which blurred my vision.

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The after details proved that what I had feared had happened. The storm had been so blinding as to prevent either of the engineers from seeing the headlights in time to avert the crash.

FLIER NO. 4, WESTBOUND

In conclusion, it is only just to the agent at Gainsville to say that he did not flee the country before the inquest—which is no infrequent happening in such catastrophes.

He truthfully stated at the enquiry that he had been sleeping when I called him up and gave him the order to detain the express for the crossing. In the half-awake condition in which he had taken my order he had forgotten to turn the signal lights. He had dozed again after getting the order. When the express, seeing no signals, had rushed past, he had been roused by the noise, and had mechanically wired me the time she had passed. He confessed that he only remembered the order when I wired him asking what was meant by reporting her departure.

He was convicted of manslaughter. For six years he expiated in prison the punishment imposed upon him.

The one so dear to me on the illfated train had only been very slightly injured. Although we have been one now for many years, the memory and terror of the accident are as vividly fixed in her mind as though it were but yesterday.

THE SILENCE OF THE PLAINS

The Silence of the Plains

AWAY, far out on the prairies, miles distant from any other human habitation, was a small cottage built of logs. From the chimney of the lone house there floated on the frosty air a wraith of smoke that the intense frost converted into a ghostly, whitish vapor. The air had a peculiar quiet.

It was one of those wintry afternoons on the Western plains that so frequently create feelings of sadness and longing in the heart of the settler. Sitting at the window, in brooding silence, was a young woman. As she gazed across the great expanse of snow a sad expression, tinged with bitterness, crept into her face. Her thoughts were far distant—away off in the ancient Province of Quebec, where she had been born and bred. She was recalling events of just two years ago that day. It had been her wedding day. What laughter and gladness had characterized it! What a contrast to the loneliness of this afternoon! Shortly after her marriage they had moved away from her home, where there had always been company and brightness, to this far, lone land. "And for what reason," she fretted, "had they moved? The old reason," she told herself, "the lust of money, the object that men will strive for till old age overtakes them and they have no power left to enjoy that for which they sacrificed themselves." As she went over

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this old train of thought her heart hardened. It had been in vain that she had reasoned with her husband to remain in the placid village where he had met her; his ambitions had been stronger than the strength of her pleading; hence, like so many other wives, she had submitted, and was now in a land that to her contained little more than monotonous wastes of snow and killing solitude.

Presently rising, she murmured bitterly: "The fault, after all, is mine. I should not have come. It would have been better had I married—" The entrance of her husband, Jean Rousseau, a middle-aged man, clad in Canadian homespun, prevented the completion of the sentence.

"I have hitched up the horse, Marie," he said, quietly, "and I think we will take a drive to the village. Wrap up and come with me."

"I would rather stay," she answered, briefly.

"But think, dear; to-morrow will be Christmas. We must buy a little to brighten up things for the day."

There was a kindliness and patience in his tone that somewhat soothed her; but the depression of many months could not be cast off in a moment. She refused again, but more gently.

He hesitated for a space, and then, with eyes which were full of pleading, went to her side: "Be brave, Marie," he said, gently, "and do not brood over it so. I—I suppose, dear, I should not have brought you to such a far country; but I did it for the best. We are not doing badly and, as you know,

THE SILENCE OF THE PLAINS

the place is settling a little. There will be neighbors by-and-by for you and things that will interest. Think, if we went back to the old place now, what would they say? I should be called a failure. And you? As the wife of a failure you would be pitied. For my sake be patient. Go, wrap up and come; the drive will brighten you."

She stood in troubled way for a space, and then answered, with an effort at cheerfulness: "I really do not feel well enough for a drive in such bitter weather. Do not be long away, and when you return we will do some Christmas decorating for to-morrow."

For an instant she was folded in his arms with a passion that spoke of the depth of his love better than any words could have done. She bore his embrace passively.

As she stood in the waning light of the afternoon watching his sleigh fade away in the distance, the window framed a really attractive picture. She was a pretty woman both in form and features. She was still young, twenty-five. Her husband had turned forty. She had married him against the wishes of many friends who, as was the custom with French-Canadians, liked the young to marry the young. His long, unswerving kindness and devotion had won her in the end, yet hers had never been a real affection. But his love was devotion itself.

As she turned from the window into the gloom and quiet of the cottage the old heartache for the home and friends of her youth again exerted its subtle influence over her.

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Going aimlessly to the big box wood-stove she threw some pieces of cordwood on the fire. Leaving the stove door open, she drew up a chair and sat meditatively watching the flames as they fiercely attacked the wood.

From the dreariness of the prairie life her thoughts turned to her husband again, and of what she held his injustice in burying her in such a far place. She sat so long before the fire that the gloom of the early winter afternoon turned into semi-darkness. Except for the occasional crackling of the wood the intense quiet was unbroken. Her discontent deepened with the shadows.

The peril of her discontent was close at hand.

Breaking unexpectedly into the silence came the sound of sleighbells. Rising quickly, she went to the window. Her husband had a drive of many miles before him, and she knew the sleigh could not be his. Could it be a stranger? She smiled bitterly at the thought. Strangers' visits were like those of angels in that region.

Peering out of the window, she discerned the outlines of an approaching horse and sleigh. A few moments later the sleigh was at her door, and a man's voice called to the horse.

At the sound of the voice her heart leaped with something like fear. Her eyes shone and her cheeks were dyed with color.

"Rene Beaudoin!" she exclaimed, in astonishment. "Impossible; he is two thousand miles away—in the old village."

THE SILENCE OF THE PLAINS

There was a knock.

With unsteady fingers she raised the latch and opened the door. The man was so muffled in his coat that, in the gloom, she could not make out his features.

"I am a stranger," he said, abruptly, "and not acquainted with these parts. May I get warmed a little?"

There was no longer any doubt. It was Rene Beaudoin, the boy she had gone to school with in her native village, for whom she had always possessed a certain liking, and who, in her womanhood, she had refused for the man so much older than herself—Jean Rousseau.

"Come in." Her voice was low and uncertain.

In the gloom of the doorway he could not make out her features, but he started at the sound of her voice. He silently entered, and as she closed the door he went to the stove and held out his numbed hands to the warmth. He was small of stature and delicately formed.

Taking down a lamp, she fumbled with it for a time, and then struck a match. It spluttered for a moment, giving no certain light, and went out. Her back was turned to him, but even in the shadows that enveloped her there was that in her pose that heightened the expectancy in his face.

Silently striking another match she lit the lamp, and then, lamp in hand, in the full glare of light, turned to him.

"Marie—Marie Rousseau!"

THE TRAITOR

She could not help noting the gladness in his tone and the pleasure shining in his eyes. The color flooded into her face.

Putting the lamp down and striving for control, she said: "Yes, it is I, Rene." Placing a chair near the stove, she continued: "Sit down and get warmed. I am sorry Jean is out. He has gone to the village, some miles distant. He will be back before it is very late."

The constraint in her voice, and the subdued manner of her greeting, brought a perplexed and almost wounded look into his face. Noting it, she was sorry in a moment. Going to where he sat she frankly held out her hand and said: "So it is really you, Rene? It seems impossible. I could not believe my eyes."

He took the outstretched hand with a fervor that had something a little more in it than mere friendship.

In an animated way she replenished the fire again, and then they both seated themselves beside it. She waited expectantly for the explanation of his unlooked-for coming.

"Since you went away, two years ago," he began, "my Uncle Narcisse died. As was expected, he remembered me in his will. Half of his money comes to me; the other half goes to the church. When his will was read it was found he had land away out here on the prairies, and so I came for the purpose of selling it. That explains my presence. After the sale

THE SILENCE OF THE PLAINS

I shall go back again, Marie, to the old happy village where we both grew up."

His words brought back to her again the old depression. "Yes," she said slowly, "back to the old happy village, back to the old friends and to the old glad life."

Her sadness touched him, and he wanted to give comfort. "And are the prairies really so very lonely?" he asked.

"Lonely?" She rose as she spoke. "To some they are not, Rene; but to me they are more desolate than I can express." Out of force of habit she was at the window again, looking out into the shadows. He was of her own age, and had not lived down the impulsiveness of youth. The sad droop of her shoulders strongly appealed to him; but what affected him the most was the knowledge that she was a discontented wife. No greater temptation can come to many men than knowledge such as this.

He made a sudden movement as though he would go to her side, but with an effort restrained himself. After a silence he said: "Sit down, Marie, and let us talk over the past. Let me tell you of your people in the village at home. This will make you forget the—the lonely, trying life here."

She did not resent the inference of his words. Again she resumed her seat near the stove.

Like so many of his race, he talked well, and soon she was living in the past again—a past she had never forgotten, and which was far more desirable

THE TRAITOR

to her than striving to hew out a new home in Western lands.

When he ceased, silence fell between them. Finally he said, slowly: "Yes, such solitude as this must be hard for one to bear who loved brightness and friends as you did."

She answered without considering: "The loneliness is overpowering."

He was neither physically nor morally strong, and now he forgot everything but his long passion for this woman, who had chosen another and who was now discontented and unhappy. Rising impulsively a torrent of words fell from his lips. His face was intensely pleading.

.

In after years neither of them could precisely have told how such folly could have happened; few can when facing a crisis in which reason has no part, and in which emotion has the complete mastery. The strength of his pleading was in the very weapon that she, herself, had forged—her dissatisfaction. He used it with dangerous skill.

She got angry, rebelled, refused; but in answer he dwelt on the silent terror of the plains; the years of endurance that were still before her. At last she took refuge in silence and would not answer. Still he pleaded. It came to him, finally, that his fight was hopeless; and then, in sudden anger, he drew his coat about him and angrily left the cottage.

She stood where he had left her. Startling her now came the low moaning of the wind. Its mourn-

THE SILENCE OF THE PLAINS

ful cadence depressed her even more than the silence. Outside, the temper of the night was changing rapidly. When the sound of sleighbells, a moment later, stole into the cottage she covered her eyes with her hand: she knew he was going, and her heart faithfully pictured to her the going out of everything that was bright. The climax came when she heard a muffled voice calling her name. Without weighing the impulse, she ran to the door and opened it. In the light which shone out of the room she saw him seated in the sleigh, one hand holding the reins. With his disengaged hand he made a mute appeal.

She made a quick, wilful gesture. His face lit up. Later, when seated by his side, she saw he had turned the head of the animal in the direction of the station, twelve miles distant. In the cottage a scribbled note told of her flight.

Had she been less overwrought the danger of attempting the drive in a rising prairie wind, and with a threatening sky, would certainly have come to her. He, being a stranger to the prairies, knew nothing of the tragic deeds which happen on them in midwinter by winds that are undisputed in their sway by either tree or shrub.

Night was now closing in rapidly about them. Occasionally, however, stars were to be seen. By their meagre light, and with her guidance, he trusted to reach their destination.

But ere they had traversed a third of the way the wind had increased perceptibly, and though no snow

THE TRAITOR

was falling he was perplexed by seeing all about him queer, swirling eddies of snow, which the wind scooped up from the prairie and carried skyward. So fine were the snowy particles that they ascended in dense, confusing clouds. Every moment the cone-like eddies were coalescing and becoming more formidable. The frozen atoms blinded and stung worse than the dust of the desert. Presently the sky was shut out entirely.

"Rene, I am afraid," she broke out, nervously. "We are in great danger. A blizzard is springing up, and we may get lost. Blizzards are terrible on these plains. We may be frozen to death." She laid her hand on his arm as she spoke. At that moment a brief break in the swirling clouds showed her face pale and apprehensive.

The prairies being new to him, he made light of her fears and touched the animal with his whip. As though in derision of his words a phenomena of the snow-girt plains burst upon them; the wind, with a furious roar, seemed to blow from every quarter at once. Instantaneously it became absolutely dark. Even the horse could not be seen. A whirlwind of snow shrieked and beat down on the stunned driver with incredible fury.

Her words had been only too prophetic. They were in the grip of a winter's blizzard, the dread of every white man, no matter what years he may have spent on the prairies.

She uttered a low, gasping cry and drew the sleigh-robe up to her face to escape from the suffo-

THE SILENCE OF THE PLAINS

cating white clouds. In bewilderment the horse stopped and neighed apprehensively. With fear now gripping the heart of the driver, he tugged at the reins, trying to make the beast retrace its steps. The animal moved on in peculiar way for a time and then stopped again; all it had done was to complete a zig-zag circle. The truth at last was forced home to the man: they were lost. The maelstrom about them was appalling. It so happened that they were in the very vortex of the storm. So icy and penetrating were the blasts that no human being could long endure them. Panic seized upon him, and in bewilderment and terror he shouted for help; but the gale caught the words from his lips so sharply that they were not even heard by the sobbing figure crouched at the bottom of the sleigh by his feet. Soon his hands were so benumbed that he could no longer grasp the reins. The snow strangled him, and his very lungs seemed bursting. Physically effeminate and face to face with death, he became literally sick with fear. Blinded and choking, he sank down by her side. In his panic he did not even think to screen his face with a portion of the robe. Accentuating the storm's fury, the horse at intervals uttered neighs so piercing as to be heard even above the fury of the gale. The weird, unearthly cries but added to the mortal fear of the man. There he crouched, stupor, terror and intense cold blinding him.

Terrified though she was, she endeavored to rouse him. When, finally, she succeeded he did a thing that burned itself in her memory for all time. With

THE TRAITOR

an inarticulate cry he turned like one insane and began to drag at the robe which covered her. Getting possession of it, he wrapped the whole of it about his head and face; instinct, more than reason, had told him that in the preservation of his breath the hour of freezing to death could be warded off. She was now at his side without a shred of the robe. She uttered no protest. The horror of his act shook her more than the death which faced them. Kindred acts of savagery flashed to memory in panics at sea; but this act from the man who so shortly before had protested that she was infinitely more dear to him than life could ever be! Tears, bitter and unavailing, coursed down her freezing cheeks.

In terrified, huddled manner he crouched motionless at the bottom of the sleigh, the dread cold stealing away his senses. The drift about the horse and sleigh had mounted so that it reached the animal's chest. Endeavoring to escape the freezing blasts the animal moved its head pathetically from side to side.

Like the man she had fled with, she, too, was now quiet. She was kneeling in a corner of the sleigh—as far from him as possible. Her coat she had taken off and wrapped about her head and face. She knew full well what was the meaning of the stupor creeping over her senses and shutting out pain. To the last moment of consciousness there was, in this the greatest crisis of her life, but one agonizing wish—to have her husband by her side. With clear vision she now properly estimated the value of the loving, patient man who had made her his wife. No words could

THE SILENCE OF THE PLAINS

frame her longing to be safe with him in the sheltering home with which she had been so discontented. It had taken a dread crisis to enable her to properly estimate things that freedom from real care had caused her to distort.

Soon a feeling of absolute warmth and comfort possessed her; but following fast on the heels of the hallucination was unconsciousness.

The figure of the man had lost all human semblance, so quickly had the snow filled the sleigh. His powers of endurance had not been so great as hers, and unconsciousness had imprisoned him for some time before it had come to her.

Typical of many blizzards, it ended abruptly. Presently the moon shone peacefully down on the great expanse. The horse, buried up to its very shoulders, moved its head weakly. Suddenly it reared its head, listened, and then winnowed plaintively. In the distance was the faint jingle of sleigh-bells and the shout of a man's voice. The sounds made the beast frantic, and it fought fiercely to free itself. The driver of the approaching sleigh was Jean Rousseau. He had returned to the cottage shortly after his wife had left, had found her note, and, despite the danger of the storm, had started out immediately after them.

Soon he was by her side, chafing her hands, breathing his warm breath into her mouth, and bringing warmth once more into her body.

The robe that had covered the face of the man in the sleigh, Jean Rousseau had thrown aside. In his

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rage he would not minister to him. The moon lit up the sharp white features of the freezing man in gruesome manner.

When consciousness at last came back to her, and when she saw who it was that was by her side, she sobbingly put her arms weakly about his neck. He uttered no word as he carried her from the sleigh and placed her in his own. Freeing the almost buried animal from the sleigh, he tied it to the back of his own. For a moment he stood irresolute. A hard look settled in his eyes, and he made a motion as though he would get into his sleigh and drive immediately away, leaving the upturned face to be moulded into ice by the elements that had so righteously brought him disaster. As he wavered there came floating over the prairies, on the frosty air, the rhythmic sound of church bells. He instantly uncovered his head and made the sign of the cross. The bells were from the distant village church calling the faithful, that Christmas Eve, to rejoice over the birth of One whose forgiveness was so wide that it covered all transgressions. The noblest that was in Jean Rousseau triumphed. Going to the buried sleigh, he lifted the man, wrapped him again in the robe, and then laid him in the bottom of his own sleigh. As the homeward journey continued, the voices of the calming bells grew louder, more sweet, and more commending.

In two days' time she had almost recovered, but it was three weeks before the man was fit to leave. There had been no place in the settlement for Jean

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Rousseau to take him to but his own cottage. A woman had been hired to nurse him. Even on the day he left Marie Rousseau did not see him. On the afternoon of his departure he stood before the man he would have wronged with bowed head. He held out a thin white hand, asking mute forgiveness. But Jean Rousseau's hand remained by his side. After a painful silence Jean Rousseau said tensely: "Your road, Rene Beaudoin, lies there." He pointed to the east. Without another word Jean closed the cottage door and then walked with firm steps to his wife's bedroom. He found her with her face buried in her hands. Sobs were shaking her. As he stood in silence, she rose unsteadily and went to his side. She attempted to speak, but the words would not come.

Since that night he had asked no explanations; he had let her know he did not desire any—so long as his roof had to shelter the man who had sought her undoing.

Going to her side, he laid his hand on her shoulder. "I know," he began, very quietly, "that you have always disliked this prairie life. I did wrong in persuading you to come, but I did it for the best. My hope was that, in later years, I could make you very comfortable. But—well, I have failed; we will go to the East again."

There was no upbraiding in his voice, and his kindness went to her heart more than aught else could have done. The flood-gates of her heart were opened, and she sobbed bitterly on his breast.

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"I—I know you did it on an impulse," he went on, "and that there was no premeditation; that his coming was an accident. In the weeks that have gone by since—since that night I have seen, without explanation, how you have suffered, and how you would give the world to recall your act."

In a manner peculiar to him he put his hands to her face and gently raised it. Their eyes met. Soon the pain that so long had filled his own died out, for in the upturned face he read of the birth of a finer and nobler woman than had existed before the crisis; this, with a love shining in her eyes of which there could be no question, swept away the last vestige of his unhappiness.

As he folded her passionately in his arms she said, anxiously: "You will not take me away to the East again, Jean?"

"Not from the lonely prairies?" he asked, gently.

"Jean," she answered, with a painful break in her voice, "the plains have no more terror for me."

"Because?" he queried, with eagerness.

Again she raised her face to his and let him read the answer.

What he read satisfied heart and mind alike.

And so it chanced that, while he yet looked into her face, the setting sun overcame a cloud that had hid its brightness and beamed into the room. The promise was for a glorious morrow.

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THE MILLS OF THE GODS

The Mills of the Gods

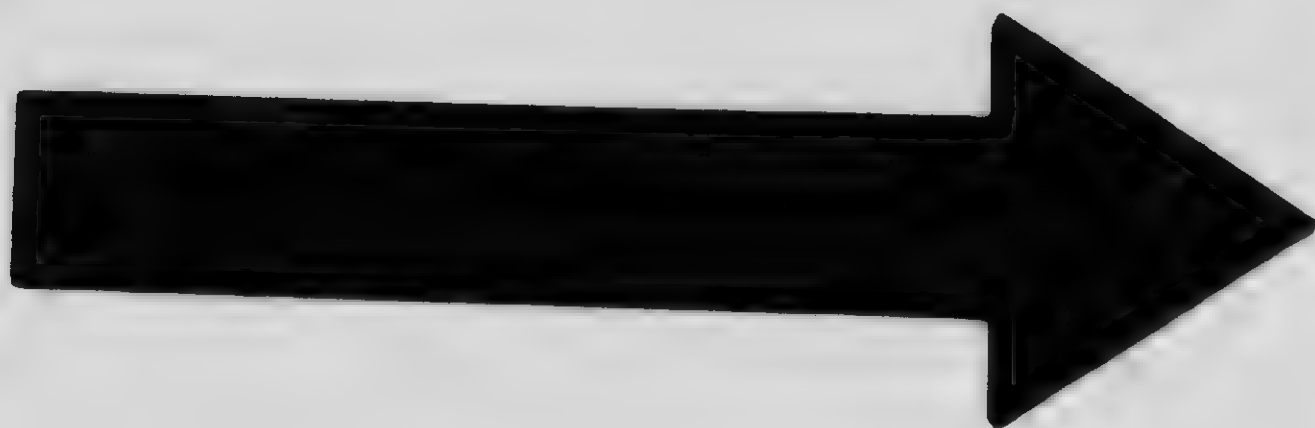
UPON the little village of St. Angele the north wind bore furiously down, lashing the newly-fallen snow into fragments fine as flour, and heaping it in great mounds about the exposed farm-dwelling of Jules Crepeau.

It was Shrove Tuesday, and even for the Province of Quebec the weather was unusual in its severity.

The day was almost spent. In two hours more Ash Wednesday would be ushered in—to the French habitant a holy day of solemn, religious import.

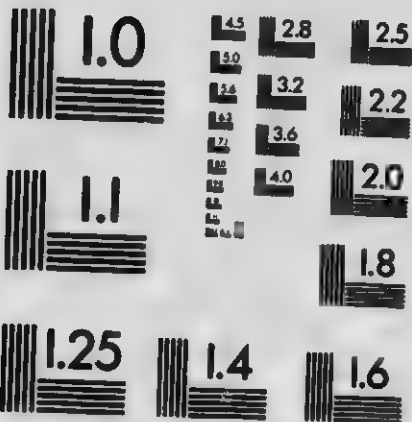
The lowering mood of the night was in striking contrast with the scene of revelry in Farmer Crepeau's cottage. Through the quaint dormer windows a score of couples were seen dancing joyously in the great kitchen, while, at short intervals, bursts of merry laughter were heard even above the voice of the storm. In one corner of the room, near the glowing box wood-stove, sat the entire orchestra of the district—Fiddler Jean Rousseau. Although four-score years and five he fiddled with the vim of a man half his age. On every face shone eager enjoyment.

In a little bedroom, off the kitchen, a different scene was being enacted. On her knees, before a crucifix—on each side of which were lighted candles—was a woman far past middle age. A strangely apprehensive look shone on her face. She prayed feverishly,



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counting her beads with quick, nervous energy, and gazing imploringly at the holy emblem above her. There was but one burden to her prayer; that all evil influences of the Prince of Darkness might be kept from her home, and especially from one most dear to her.

As she ceased her devotions and rose, the door opened and her husband, Jules Crepeau, entered. Sixty years of tilling the earth had left their marks upon him; his shoulders drooped perceptibly and his face was deeply lined; yet withal his eyes were still bright and the expression of his countenance pleasant. As he noted the worried, almost haunted, look in his wife's face, a troubled expression came into his eyes, and stepping quickly to her side he said, soothingly: "There, there; how foolish of you to be so afraid. Have I not promised that before the stroke of twelve the dancing shall stop? How, then, wife, can there be danger? The blessed church (here he crossed himself) allows us to be merry on Shrove Tuesday; for to-morrow, the beginning of Lent, there will be forty days of fasting and penance."

Madame Crepeau looked at him with troubled gaze for a moment, and then said, in a voice that faltered with fear: "Yes, I know the church allows us to feast and be merry this day; but, Jules," she laid her hand imploringly on his arm, "it is always dangerous to keep the merry-making and dancing up too late. Suppose there should be a mistake and that the dance should not stop before twelve, then—then—".

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She drew nearer to him in fear, her face turned towards the window, as though she dreaded some evil influence without.

Her husband's arms were now about her: "It is but a tale, wife," he said, uneasily, "and the Evil One cannot do injury to us should the dance, by accident, chance not to stop just at the dawn of the holy day."

"Hush, Jule, hush!" she placed her hand quickly on his lips to stop further words. "You know," she went on, vehemently, "that it is not a tale; it is true, true as the blessed church itself. You remember twenty years ago this very night," her voice sank to a whisper, "when Narcisse Durand kept up the dance into Ash Wednesday——"

"Wife, wife——"

"Ah, you remember and fear as I do. It is now in your memory how that at one o'clock in the morning, when Narcisse left the dance to go and bring in wood, he never returned again alive; he was found near the wood-pile, dead, a look of horror on his face." As she ceased she wrung her hands in keen distress.

Her husband stood in silence at her side, uneasily pulling at his unkempt beard.

With an impulsive gesture his wife turned quickly to him, and went on, breathlessly, "Somehow, Jule, I dread for our daughter, Marie, to-night. The others that were born to us are now all married or dead. She is the only one left. Yesterday she was nineteen. Would to the

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Virgin she were married to her lover, Paul Dumochel." Here the mother sighed, and continued. "Poor Paul, how she tries him with her winsome, changeful ways—even more, Jule, than she does us." Again her tone changed and she said with apprehension: "What, Jule, if Marie should insist upon continuing the dance for a few moments after midnight. Oh, I dare not think of it!"

She was now weeping on her husband's shoulder in poignant distress.

In a strangely subdued way old Jule sat down and drew her to a seat by his side. With his arm about her they sat listening to the sounds of merriment in the room beyond, and to the riotous cries of the storm without. An unusual depression crept over both as the minutes sped by.

"Come," he said presently. He drew her gently to her feet, and then, silently, side by side, they entered the great kitchen where the dancing was in progress.

"Tak yo' partners fo' de nex' dance," came in quaint broken English from Jean Rousseau as he twanged the strings of his ancient fiddle in the forlorn hope of getting it somewhat into tune.

In a twinkling all was commotion, and there was a scurrying round for partners.

Paul Dumochel, true as the needle to the magnet, strode towards where Marie was sitting—she was to be his life partner, and his devotion to the wilful, winsome maid had for long been a theme of comment in the village.

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And of a truth any maid might have been proud of such a lover. Even in his homespun suit he was a striking figure. Six feet two in height, he towered perceptibly over all the other guests. His great strength was known for miles around. If somewhat rugged his features were well modelled; courage, and joy in his young manhood, shone in the quick glance of his dark eyes.

In a corner of the room sat the object of all his hopes and ambitions—Marie. Standing in front of her was a young man; from his gestures he was evidently asking her to be his partner in the dance about to be formed. It was on her lips to explain that she had promised the dance to Paul Dumochel when she chanced to glance down the room and saw the anxious Paul striding in her direction with a haste and concern on his face that amused her. In an instant the spirit of mischief took possession of her, and rising impulsively she took the arm of the young man who desired her for the dance.

The next moment the orchestra broke into a droning waltz, and just as Paul reached her side she was being whirled away. Her bright witching brown eyes flashed into Paul's for a moment and then she was gone.

From where she sat the anxious mother had noticed her daughter's wilful action, and in some unaccountable way it accentuated the depression she had no longer the power to throw off.

Poor, wounded Paul!

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He stood where she had left him, an angry, bitter feeling filling his heart. For the first time in his life it came to him that there was something painfully inharmonious and out of tune with the playing of Fiddler Rousseau. After a time he sat down and gazed with rebellious spirit at the floor.

Several times she passed him, and had he looked up he would have seen her roguish face turned somewhat penitently in his direction; his thoughts, however, were engaged with a plan that was to work deep sorrow for them both, and so he saw not the mute appeals for forgiveness.

Never during the years he had known Marie had he flirted with another girl in the village. Why not now pay her back in her own coin? Might it not cure her of her propensity to flirt—a failing of hers that had caused him unnumbered heartaches.

Before the dance had ended he had mapped out an unusual course to pursue during the remainder of the evening.

“We now tak’ time for eat some refreshment.”

The fiddler, without warning, abruptly laid down his instrument as he called out the welcome announcement. The whirl of figures ceased; a buzz of voices mingled with laughter was heard through the room, and soon the men were carrying refreshments to and fro.

Among those who assisted was Paul Dumochel. First to one shy miss, and then another, he hurried with a load of good things, his merry laughter and handsome face being welcome everywhere. In some

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perverse way, though, he never seemed to reach the place where Marie, attended by the young man she had danced with, was sitting. Presently Marie covertly noticed that Paul was paying marked attention to a young woman of the village, of Juno-like figure, whom she had long suspected of having a covert liking for her lover. And now Marie's heart rose in hot rebellion. If she had never flirted in her life before she would do so now! Ample opportunity was about to be given her.

At last the refreshments were cleared away, and then the voice of the aged floormaster and fiddler rang out again:

"We now have de dance some more."

Sounds of approbation greeted the announcement, but before anyone could rise, the attention of all was turned curiously to the door. There had suddenly rung out, even above the roar of the storm, the distinct ringing of sleighbells. The ringing ceased abruptly and then followed a knock at the door. At so late an hour and in such a storm the incident was unusual.

Farmer Crepeau strode quickly to the door and opened it. A young man, apparently about twenty-five, entered.

"I am afraid I have lost the road," he said in cultured French, "and so I made bold enough to knock."

With true French-Canadian hospitality Farmer Crepeau bade him enter. Without hesitation the invitation was accepted.

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As the stranger divested himself of his great coat it was seen he was faultlessly clad, and that his station in life must be much different than the simple folk whose hospitality he had sought.

As host and guest walked down the room there was complete silence. With high-bred courtesy the stranger in gracious condescension bowed, first to one and then to another. Just as he was passing where Marie was sitting his dark, brilliant eyes caught hers, and he paused for an instant as though surprised. No one save Paul noticed the sudden flush which rose to Marie's cheek.

"Come, come; de dance, de dance."

The orchestra was getting impatient. The fiddler's voice broke the peculiar stillness that had settled down upon the dancers.

In the search for partners which ensued the stranger for the present was forgotten.

Standing between Madame Crepeau and her husband, the wayfarer conversed pleasantly, watching, however, with some interest the different young men, as one after another they selected partners. But his most keen interest, and covert glances, all the while were centred in the direction where Marie sat. With true feminine quickness Marie noted this and her heart beat rapidly. Never before did she remember seeing one so distinguished and stately in her father's home. Despite her interest in the new arrival, however, she waited somewhat anxiously to see if Paul would come to her for this dance after her slighting of him.

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But Paul, as yet, had no mind to be in a very gracious mood; and soon to her dismay she saw him go to the centre of the room with the buxom maiden he had been waiting upon. With anger still more intensified against him she involuntarily rose, and scarcely thinking what she did, walked to where her parents and the stranger were conversing.

She was about to speak to her father when, turning to the stranger, her father said: "This, Mr. Vaillaincourt, is my daughter, Marie."

The face of the stranger took on a peculiar expression. "I am an uninvited guest," he said, bowing and addressing Marie. He paused and went on with flattering earnestness, "but I should dearly like, though, to take the privilege of an honored guest, and plead with Mademoiselle for this dance."

In a quiet way he turned and looked for assent at Farmer Crepeau.

"My home, Monsieur," said Farmer Crepeau quickly, "would be honored."

Marie's countenance lit up with pleasure.

As the guest and her daughter turned away and joined the dancers Madame Crepeau glanced uneasily across the room at a small clock, with exposed swinging pendulum—the hour was 11.35. "Would to the Virgin," she whispered, under her breath, "that twenty-five minutes more had gone, and it were time to stop the dance!" She arose and went to the little bedroom off the great kitchen; and once more her husband followed her, depression and unrest stealing over him.

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What strange temper had come over the dancers? As the minutes sped on and on, and one dance quickly followed another, a very spirit of madness for the dance seemed to possess them. Even Fiddler Rousseau seemed tireless. His withered hands handled viol'in and bow with an energy unknown to them for a quarter of a century.

And Marie! She was like one enthralled. She seemed veritably to be treading on air as she sped round and round with the distinguished stranger, who had come so unexpectedly among them. But with all her waywardness, she loved sincere, earnest Paul Dumochel; yet had she never known him she could not, in some unaccountable way have so suddenly ceased to think of him. The stranger attracted her as never had man before; about him there was a personality that absorbed her with wondrous witchery. All the time they danced the rich melody of his voice sounded in her ears. He was telling her of himself; of wondrous countries visited; of beauteous lakes mirroring towering mountains; of valleys clothed with tropical flowers and domed with glowing skies. Anon, in the same subtle monotone, he told her of grand palaces and castles where ladies—not so beauteous as she—reigned supreme over unnumbered hearts; gold, jewels, and costly raiment about them on every hand—such might be the lot of the one who would become his wife.

Thus she continued to dance, absorbed in the strange new world being opened up before her mind's eye.

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But all the time he talked and danced the eyes of the stranger were restlessly seeking the face of the little clock whose tiny pendulum was slowly but surely counting off the remaining minutes that yet separated night from the dawn of the holy day which was of such great import to every heart present.

Presently, as if fatigued, the stranger as though by chance, stopped close to the timepiece. He was still talking; and with bent head she continued to listen, her breath coming and going rapidly. None paid heed to them; the excitement among the dancers was visibly increasing with the approach of midnight.

With tense face Fiddler Rousseau was bent over his instrument, his eyes closed, his lips colorless; the bow was flashing with unabated vigor.

In the scene now revealed in the room there was that which was both weird and uncanny.

Had Marie been less enthralled she would have seen the stranger, with a covert, deft motion, touch the pendulum of the clock and stop its industry.

The hands pointed to *fifteen minutes of midnight!*

A moment later the stranger's arm was about her again and they mingled with the dancers once more.

Poor Paul. Morose, and with bitter jealousy tugging at his heart he sat apart, he, alone, apparently unaffected by the unnatural excitement about him. Suddenly he started and looked up. Marie and the stranger had just sped by him; to his astonishment he had distinctly heard the stranger ask his fiancée to cast away the little cross suspended from the beads about her neck.

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What did it mean? Paul rose mechanically to his feet, a bewildering dread at his heart. In vain he strove to fathom what motive might underlie such dread request. In his trouble and great disquiet he seized his cap and strode from the house into the storm.

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In the little bedroom Farmer Crepeau still sat with his wife. But few words had passed between them. The tempestuous night continued to deepen the presentiment of approaching evil which now so thoroughly mastered them.

Twice his wife had asked him if the fingers of the clock did not yet point to five minutes of midnight; and each time her husband had opened the door and peered out through the maze of dancers at the diminutive face of the time-piece. But the burden of years had made his gaze uncertain; he simply saw the minute hand had not arrived at the point so momentous to them. It never for a moment occurred to him that the clock might *not be going!*

Thus they sat on.

At last he could bear the tension no longer, and was just about to rise and proclaim to the dancers that the merriment must cease, when his attention was attracted to the discordant and piercing neigh of a horse.

Madame Crepeau sprang nervously to her feet and clung to his arm. The sound had filled her with extreme terror.

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Pointing in the direction of the window she said in a hushed, awed voice: "It came from that direction."

With lips tightly set, and with nerves strung to their utmost tension, he took the lamp off the bureau and walked to the window. Reaching it he drew the curtains aside, and holding the lamp high above his head peered out into the evil night. For a moment nothing was revealed; but moving the lamp so the rays fell in the direction of the house door there was brought to view the horse and sleigh belonging to the stranger. A whispered exclamation of astonishment fell from Farmer Crepeau's lips; the animal, long ago, had been taken to the stable and divested of its harness. How did it happen that it was back in the sleigh again? Had the stranger suddenly decided that he would go on despite the storm? Utterly at sea he was about to turn from the window when, to his still greater astonishment, he saw Paul approaching the animal in a manner that evinced both profound surprise and alarm. Again the lamp was held high above his head and he looked nervously on.

A few steps more and the watcher saw Paul reach the animal's side. Then a mysterious and strange thing happened: Paul was seen to throw up his arms in a very paroxysm of dread, and there burst from his lips a cry of mortal horror and fear. Turning he fled towards the house as one possessed.

As the cry reached the little room Madame Crepeau sank on her knees, caught up the cross lying on the bureau and began hysterically to call upon the saints

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to protect them, this terrible night, from the evils without. Between her prayers she besought her husband to cease looking out of the window and hasten to her side.

With ashen face her husband had just heeded her prayers when the door of the little bedroom was thrust suddenly open and Paul staggered in.

Crucifix in hand, Madame Crepeau rose to her feet and looked at him in dazed alarm. Paul paid no heed to her. Running to her husband's side he seized his arm: "Come, come with me quick, quick!" he cried in terrified voice.

For a moment Farmer Crepeau hesitated, then, without questioning, he followed Paul from the room. A stifled cry of distress from Madame Crepeau reached them both; but they did not pause.

Regardless of the guests and their maddened dancing, the two men went swiftly to the street door, opened it and passed out.

A little distance from the door the horse and sleigh loomed faintly up. The fury of the storm was now at its height, and as its many menacing voices fell on Farmer Crepeau's ears he drew back as though dreading to go on. The old man made a spectral figure with his long grey hair, beard tossing in the wind, and set white face.

Feeling him draw back, Paul grasped his arm, and for a few steps drew him on by sheer force. "For the love of the Saviour hasten!" he cried.

With a whispered prayer for the Virgin's protection Farmer Crepeau went forward.

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A few moments more and they were at the side of the sleigh. Then, suddenly pointing at the ground where the horse was standing, Paul cried in quaking voice: "See, look, look!"

For a space Farmer Crepeau saw nothing strange in the gloomy, uncertain light, but taking a step closer to the animal and stooping towards the earth a dread and unnerving thing was revealed to his sight. For a score of feet, about where the animal was standing, the deep, hard snow had been melted entirely away—the bare earth, in this spot alone, was distinctly revealed.

With a gasp the old man sprang back. He would have fallen had not Paul caught him. Even in the numbness of his terror it was all clear to him now; the animal belonged to the Fiend of Darkness; and the Evil One, himself, was the stranger they had welcomed and were harboring within—and this, too, at the dawn of Holy Ash Wednesday!

As they turned to flee to the house the wild, gruesome neigh of the horse again rang out above the storm. Burning now in Farmer Crepeau's distraught mind was one frantic desire: to stop the dance before midnight arrived; this but accomplished, all machinations of the Evil One must come to naught.

Had the dancers not been under some unnatural spell they must have noticed the abrupt, noisy entrance of the two men; but again none paid the slightest heed.

Like a drunken man Farmer Crepeau, with Paul at his side, stumbled to the corner, where the little

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clock stood. As the old man's eyes turned to the face of the clock he uttered a low cry of thanksgiving. Pointing at the timepiece he said huskily: "See, Paul, see, it yet lacks fifteen minutes to midnight. The Blessed Virgin be praised!"

But Paul stood like one stricken. He tried to speak, but no words came. Raising a shaking hand he pointed at the pendulum; it swung to and fro no longer, and instinctively both knew that the midnight hour had come and gone.

The piteousness of it was too much for his years and the tension he had endured: with a choking sob and in suffocating terror Farmer Crepeau, helpless as a child, sank to a chair. His gaze wandered down the room and there, close to the door, was his daughter and the stranger.

Leaving the helpless old man, Paul sped across the room, and again abruptly entered the little room where Madame Crepeau still waited.

She was before her little shrine again, the cross clasped tightly to her bosom.

As coherently as he could Paul unfolded his dreadful story, expecting to see her sink to her knees in terror, and as incapacitated to act as the aged, sobbing man in the room beyond.

But he realized that a strange thing was happening: instead of tears and cries of terror he saw a wondrous courage and religious enthusiasm flash into the mother's face.

Ere he had quite ceased, she swept past him, threw open the door, and with the cross extended in

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both hands before her, entered the big room where the dancers were now profaning the holy day. For a moment her excited gaze flashed around the room at the wild scene of revelry, and then they rested on the face of the one she sought to save.

The dread situation was clear to the mother's mind in an instant. The stranger, with Marie at his side, had partially opened the door leading to the road. In Marie's hand was the small crucifix which, at last, she had unclasped from the beads about her neck, and which the stranger, with impetuous pleading, was begging her to cast out into the snow. With this accomplished the mother knew that nothing mortal could save Marie from the clutches of the Fiend; for all knew that with the blessed cross between him and the object of his evil intent no harm could possibly prevail—hence it was that Marie was being urged to cast away that which stood between her and her soul's salvation.

With a cry that rang through the room, and with the cross high above her head, the frantic mother sprang forward.

For an instant there was a tiny gleam before the mother's eyes—it was the direful flight of the cross, from Marie's hand, into the night.

And in that instant a dreadful laugh was heard, and Madame Crepeau then saw Satan, himself, standing where the stranger had stood, his gruesome hands outstretched to seize her child.

Truly the prayers of the mother must have counted for much, and the powers of heaven intervened; for

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just as his hands were closing about Marie another cross pressed to Marie's bosom by a thin wrinkled hand, flashed between the Evil Spirit and his prey.

"Begone! Begone! The cross of Christ separates her from thee!"

The frenzied mother screamed the words in frantic madness. Then, in the abandon of her fear, she struck the Foul Fiend with the holy emblem.

Instantaneously, with the touch of the cross, the spell which had been cast over the girl and the hapless dancers was broken. For a space it was as though the very realms of the lost were let loose in the cottage; for legend hath it that sounds, never heard by human ears before, echoed through the room; that sulphurous fumes choked the air, and then, with blasphemous utterances the Fiend fled before the power of the cross of the Redeemer.

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There is but little more to tell. Jean Rousseau, the fiddler, lived but a few days after the dreadful night. The evil influence of the spell cast over him, coupled with his age and mad fiddling, had been too much for his strength.

And Marie?—It was months before she recovered from the terror of the night and married faithful Paul Dumochel.

As for Madame Crepeau, her wondrous deed, in striking the very Fiend himself with the cross, is repeated even unto this day by the devout French-Canadian habitant.

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A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD
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A Little Child Shall Lead Them

IN deep, melodious tones the marble clock in the boudoir of Mrs. Frederic Terrill struck the hour of midnight. Scarcely had the knell of another departing day been proclaimed when the door of the boudoir opened, and Mrs. Terrill entered.

For a moment she glanced wistfully at the time-piece and then walked over to the heavily draped windows, drew the curtains aside, and looked sadly out. Her eyes were full of troubled thought. The street was almost deserted; of the one she sought there was no sign. Still she peered out; anon listening intently in the hope of recognizing a footstep well known.

As she stood there, framed in the heavy folds of the curtain, the subdued light from the globes falling softly upon her, the pretty costume she wore contrasting finely with the rich furniture and the deep red of the framing curtains, a beautiful picture was formed—one that no man could have seen without being attracted by.

Presently she turned and hurried from the room—a child's fretful cry had come to her from an adjoining chamber.

The little one, some four years of age, was found sitting up in her little cot, and sobbing distressfully.

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Taking the child in her arms, the young mother strove to comfort her as only a mother, no matter what her age, knows so well how to do.

The face of the little one was flushed, her hands feverish, and the mother's effort at soothing was not crowned with instant success. Soon, however, she attracted the attention of the child by repeating to her a favorite nursery rhyme, which was followed by another, and yet another, till the little hands, finally, seemed less hot. At last the baby eyes closed sleepily.

Again stillness reigned, and the mother was about to rise and put the child back into the cot, when it unexpectedly opened its eyes, and, holding out a dear little foot, said, in abrupt command:

"Tell me piggie go a market!"

"Yes, dearie." The soft eyes of the young mother glowed tenderly as she took the wee foot, bent down and kissed it, and then, commencing at the largest of the rosy baby toes, began tenderly:

"This piggie went to—"

"Yat ye papa, ye papa piggie, mamma," broke in the child, as though the mother was forgetting the story.

"Yes, dear, mamma was forgetting; this big piggie is the papa piggie," was the quick, soothing reply.

"Yes," answered the little one, now contented.

"Well, this piggie, this papa piggie, went to market and—"

"My papa, too, go a market, mamma?"

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For a moment the mother smiled and then answered slowly: "Yes, your papa goes to market, too."

"Me want my papa!" The demand was uttered fretfully.

"Eut papa, dear, is at the market, you see." She looked down wistfully as she spoke.

The child did not answer, and, taking the next tiny toe, the mother went on quickly: "Now, this other little piggie stayed at home—"

"Yat is ye mamma, ye mamma piggie!" Again there was the same correction in the tone.

"Yes, yes, darling; this is the mamma piggie. It is the papa piggie that goes to market and the mamma piggie that stays at home."

"Why ye mamma piggie stay a' home?" came the childish query.

"Well, perhaps it wanted to stay at home, dear."

"My mamma, too," came the words, "stay a' home and not go market wis papa."

"Yes, sweet, your mamma stays at home, too; with you, my precious." She bent and kissed the upturned little face.

There was silence for a space, and ere the mother could continue, the child, which had been looking ponderingly up into the beautiful face above her, said: "Do all mammas stay a' home?"

"Some mammas do."

"My papa no like take my mamma a market?"

"See, let me tell you what the other little toes did," came the hurried reply. There was a tremor now in the mother's voice.

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But, with a child's persistency, the little girl repeated the question.

Taking the girlie in her arms, and pressing her lips to the fair hair, the mother replied, in a low voice choked with tears:

"Your papa *used* to be fond of taking me to market, dearie."

The distress in the mother's voice could not be hidden from the child, and she broke out in tearful voice, herself: "My mamma no cry; me take my mamma a market when my papa not come a home a' night."

So the intuitions and inquisitiveness of the little mind had discovered the sorrow the young mother was so eager to hide! The pain of it all was too great for words. Had the child spoken again she must have broken into uncontrollable tears. But the little one, with a tired sigh, now settled more comfortably in the clasped arms, and soon she was sleeping uneasily.

When, long afterwards, the mother rose and laid the child in the cot, tears were still in her eyes.

Just as she was turning from the cot, a muffled sound from the street door reached her. Hurrying down the broad stairway, she reached the landing just as the door opened, and her husband entered.

"Up yet, little woman?" he said, with much good humor, as he hung his hat on the rack and then kissed her.

"Do I not always wait for you, dear?" came the quiet reply.

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"Grace, I fear you will never get over these bad habits of yours." With his arm around her they reached the boudoir. Here he turned the light higher, and was just about to seat himself when something in the beautiful face before him attracted his attention, and he said in a perplexed way: "Grace, you have been crying!"

"I think I was a little lonely," she answered, wistfully, as she went to his side again.

For a space he stood stroking her hair, and then said with a shade of irritation: "Why do you not take my advice and go out more?"

"There was a time when we used to go out together, Fred; but that—that was before—"

"Yes, before I liked a few hours at the club again; I know."

Once more there was a shade of irritability. "But we are quite old married folk now, you know, and—well, a man cannot very well give up his male friends altogether, you see."

"But if the club would be content with but half your evenings, Fred, and if I—baby and I—could have the other half." There was pleading in her tone.

"There, Grace, we have gone over this so often. A man can love his wife as well if he goes to his club as if he stays at home."

"How few wives can see it in that light, Fred."

There was a look of annoyance on the young husband's face as he turned silently away. With an abrupt turn in the conversation, he said, with much interest: "The little girlie—she is sleeping?"

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"violet," she replied, with a slight hesitation, "is sleeping."

Whatever his faults, she knew he was passionately attached to their baby girl, and she did not wish to alarm him with fears that might possibly be needless. The child had been fretful and feverish during the day; but the impression was on her mind that its indisposition was but temporary.

"I think," he said, boyishly, "I will take a peep at her while she sleeps."

She made no demur; had she done so, explanations might have been necessary.

Together they entered the little one's room.

As he bent over the cot and looked at the rounded little face, the dimly burning light prevented him from noting that it was flushed. The clothes had been partially kicked off, and one little foot was exposed. It attracted his attention, as a baby's foot ever is wont to do, and he touched it with caressing tenderness.

"Yis papa piggie went a market. . . . Yis mamma piggie stay a home."

The child murmured the words slowly and softly the moment the caressing touch was felt. In some strange way her mind was reverting back to the recent touching scene he knew naught of.

In his ignorance of it all he laughed in subdued, delighted way, and turned to the girl mother. But her face was turned so that he could not see it plainly.

"Why, what a cunning little witch she is," he said, with fatherly pride.

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

"She is always the most cunning before bedtime; if you could but see her then!" was the sad reply.

The temptation of friends to dine at the club instead of at home was not present now; and so, turning impulsively, he said, "I will come straight home from business to-morrow night, and then she shall tell me all about the piggie, the marketing and the staying at home."

He little thought of the strange way the quaint rhyme was to be re-told.

* * * * *

"Helen, the doctor must be brought; she is delirious now, and I am so afraid."

"I will go for him, madame." The servant hurried from the room, and soon the closing street door told she was speeding on her mission.

Another night had come. Eleven o'clock had rung out. The husband who had promised to come direct from business and hear the baby lips prattle the old rhyme, was still absent. The child had been still asleep when he had left in the morning; and so he had gone unconcernedly and happy, promising once more that the club should certainly not claim him that night.

As the afternoon had worn apace, the little one had been taken rapidly worse, and now, with midnight creeping on, she was already delirious.

For the first time there was that in the young mother's heart that bordered on bitterness to the husband. Had he been strong of purpose she would not, in this the greatest crisis of their short married

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life, have been left to face it alone with all her inexperience.

Her anxiety, now, was for the physician's approach.

Again and again she moistened the parched little lips, repeatedly kissing them in an abandon of grief.

And how the child prattled and prattled in her delirium! The pathos and burden of the babbling being all about the mother's tears that had distressed her so the night previous.

Before the cot the young mother kneeled, sobbing as though her heart must break.

The vigil went on till long afterwards, when the doctor at last arrived.

His diagnosis was soon taken; the disease was scarlet fever. Every care and attention must be given. He prescribed and would call early in the morning.

Again the clock in the boudoir told off the hour of midnight—the time so trying to the sick; and now the child was babbling incessantly. Gliding to and fro, the mother attended her with anxious solicitude.

An hour later while she was on her knees by the side of the cot, the street door, unnoticed by her, was opened.

As the young husband entered the hall he stood looking about for an instant in surprise. She had so kept up the sweet old custom of always meeting him, that her absence now came to him with a shock.

The most profound quietness reigned in the house.

Presently he smiled, and hanging up his hat, said half aloud: "For once, like the disciples of old, the watch has been too much for her, and she sleeps."

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He laughed softly. "What contrition will soon be hers."

To-night his eyes were brighter than what was their wont, for a distinguished foreign guest had been entertained by the club, and the toasts had been of unusual frequency.

In the mood he was in, it came to him that he would surprise his wife with his presence. He would ascend the stairs softly to their room, and jestingly pose before her as one injured by her neglect.

So, slowly and noiselessly, he began the ascent of the thickly-carpeted stairs, his lips parted in a smile at the picture his imagination was conjuring up.

He was near the top of the stairs when he drew back in abrupt surprise; the extreme quiet was suddenly broken by a child's terrified, delirious cry. Following the cry came the sound of his wife's voice—tender soothing and deep anxiety in its tone.

His first impulse was to hurry quickly forward to the little one's room, but it came to him that he might frighten his wife by his unexpected presence; so he went forward quickly and softly as before. Just as he was about to draw back the curtains and enter the chamber where the sick child lay, he heard the little one, in tearful, disconnected way, say:

"Papa go a market, and mamma cry and cry. No cry, mamma, no cry; me stay home wis you." The child was crying bitterly in her raving. Still haunting the little mind was the childish distress and dismay at the first tears she had ever caught her mother shedding.

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"Tell me piggie go a market!" she broke out again, her voice rising in imperious demand.

The curtains were now drawn partially aside. He stood like one fascinated at the unexpected scene.

With her profile turned to him, the mother strove anxiously to divert the child's mind in the hope that precious sleep might come to it again; but in vain every effort; with constant reiteration, the baby rhyme was demanded.

And now a strange curiosity took possession of him, and he stood looking on and listening with bated breath.

Giving way to the child's importunity, the mother took from under the clothing a feverish little foot, pressed it passionately to her cool cheek, and then began, brokenly:

"This dear little piggie went to market" ("Oh, my sick darling!" she whispered under her breath), "while this other little piggiestayed at home—and—"

But the memory of what was being called up, coupled with the keen, nervous tension possessing her, was beyond power of control, and she broke into choking sobs, kissing the little foot in piteous abandon.

"Me take my mamma a market. . . . My mamma no cry. . . . My papa no leave my mamma." The sound of the mother's distress had had the feared effect, and the words were called out in wilder babbling than before.

Suddenly the child sighed in exhaustion, moaned tearfully, and a moment later was breathing in heavy slumber.

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In strained suspense the mother continued to crouch by the side of the bed, not daring to move lest the little sufferer might be disturbed and waken again.

And now the curtains were parted no longer; the strain of all had been too great. With face buried in his hands, and with head bent low, he stood in the dimly lighted corridor thinking it all out.

The baby lips had made it all clear now—his neglect of the heart-broken girl-mother, with her intense affection for himself. She had always been exceedingly dear to him; yet what different ways each had of showing their affection. The supreme happiness to her had been when he was with her, while he, content with her devotion and self-sacrifice, had simply been drifting back into his bachelor life again, and taking from her the companionship she prized more highly than aught else the world could give. How great, too, had been her provocation to spend the weary hours she had waited and watched in other pleasures as he had done; he had even urged it.

With the advent of this recollection, a strange mis-giving came into his heart. In this, her great trouble, which it had been her lot to meet alone, might she not have changed with the crisis, and might not bitter resolves have been taken which would make the future different to them?

He could no longer bear the distress his fears were conjuring up.

He again silently parted the curtains. As before, she was still crouched by the side of the bed, her

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white face resting on the baby hand, which lay outstretched on the coverlet.

Her face was turned towards him. Their eyes met. She made no sign.

He stepped silently to the side of the bed and looked long at the heated little face. The heavy breathing of the child told how deep was her sleep.

Presently, with a queer sense of choking, he turned to where his wife knelt, stood irresolute for a moment, and then, kneeling by her side, drew her tenderly to him. She saw his lips move, but no words came.

In his strong emotion he bowed his head till it rested on the bed.

Looking down at the dark, clustering hair, a great tenderness swept over her. In a silent, comforting way she laid her hand upon his head.

After a long, long time he spoke.

"She is very ill?" he whispered.

"Yes," she answered, in the same low tone. "The doctor will come again in the morning. It is scarlet fever."

"And this was the night I promised to stay with you!"

Her reply was a gentle caressing touch.

Again, for many minutes, the only sound heard was the child's deep breathing.

At last he rose, and lovingly putting his arm around her that her position might be less tiring, he said, as he pointed to the curtains, "I—I was there when baby insisted on the rhyme. It seems so strange that I should never have seen it in that light before."

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

Again there was a pause and then he continued,
"Poor, poor little mother that had always to stay
at home and suffer in silence without upbraidings.
I——"

The words died away, and again his head was
averted.

And now in her eyes was a wondrous sweetness.
Gently drawing his face down she rested it upon the
hot little baby hand so precious to them both. Then
she pressed her lips to his with a tenderness that
brought him the relief he craved—the knowledge of
her unchanged affection.

Around the room were prettily framed mottoes
taken from the great Book of books, and as she raised
her face she turned and quietly pointed to one of
them.

As he looked, a fine expression came into his face.
The words had peculiar application to them:

"A little child shall lead them."

His hand sought hers, in silent promise and under-
standing.

